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The Women's Movement in Presidential Rhetoric

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Rationale

I chose to do a unit on the history of the women's equal rights movement because it is a field of study barely mentioned in history textbooks. This limited coverage makes women appear as if they did not have a history of their own. It is very important to validate their view about historical events. Almost nowhere is the female point of view represented, although women played important roles in the development of the human condition. Women's presence is neither felt nor seen because it mainly covers themes focusing on work, education, social justice philanthropy, community, marriage and health. Women's different perspective of reality will enrich the current social determinism used to explain historical events.

Both young men and young women need to know how their consciousness and identity have changed through time. This is particularly important for teenage girls who may otherwise lose inspiring female models for generations to come. Boys, on the other hand, may count on an endless set of historical examples to emulate. As unhealthy as those models may be, they provided a clearly defined identity they have an option to accept or reject. Female teens do not have those options. Mainstream media incessantly portrays them as sexual objects. My female students are aware of this commercial "game." Yet, this lack of alternatives may eventually breed a deceptive perception of reality. Ultimately, both girls and boys can develop a better understanding of each other so that a healthier relationship can be carried into their adulthood.

Overview

This unit will consider the role different presidents of the United States played during the time of the women's movement for equal rights. Students will read and analyze what kind of action they took. I will choose Teddy Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon to compare their views regarding women when they were in executive office. The American Presidency is a singular institution in that the president holds lots of power. Depending on how he uses that power to support ideas or groups, presidential rhetoric (how to motivate, explain, or convince /persuade people) may trigger constitutional confrontations with the other branches of government. Constitutional, rhetorical, and imperial presidential styles will be covered through the different

degrees of presidential involvement.

More broadly, students will study the history of women pursuing civil rights equality in the past one hundred years in the United States. The unit will examine leaders and strategies employed by the women's movement. It will begin with the Declaration of Sentiments at Seneca Falls in 1848. By comparing it to the Declaration of Independence, students will explain the discrepancy between the two documents. Lack of unity was one of the most glaring weaknesses of the women's movement. What caused it and how it could have been avoided will provide good material for conversation linked to current events. Finally, students will find reasons why the women's movement for equal rights was not linked to the civil rights movement.

At another level, I want students to analyze the roots of intolerance. They will have to find reasons, causes, and effects keeping the "other" out of mainstream society. This is the moment of truth, as students will reflect about their biases and personal convictions through class discussion and writing an individual essay. What men think about women, how both are similar/different, and how they perceive each other are questions I will use to get students involved in the exploration of gender.

Objective

This unit focuses on women's equal rights movement from 1900 to 1972 and what kind of rhetoric American presidents used to face women's demands for social justice. My main concern is to make available models which students may use to form a stable point of reference for their evolving perceptions about gender relationship.

The final goal of this unit is to give students an opportunity to compare their views, share their beliefs as well as discover their misconceptions about gender. I want to offer an environment where young adults can compare ideas and possibly question their assumptions about the role of men and women in society. Girls need to understand how their roles have changed from the past to appreciate their present social condition and to respect their evolving identity. Boys, on the other hand, are in the middle of a transition, caught between dissolving stereotypes and fast pace rising female models. It is important that both male and female adolescents begin an honest dialogue leading to a better understanding of their biological, intellectual, and psychological needs.

Ultimately, students will ground their learning using the Socratic method, the buddy system, analysis of primary sources, and writing critically about gender changes in the past one hundred years. This part of the unit satisfies the United States history 11th grade California Standards that requires students to analyze American society through speeches of Eisenhower, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon, among the others. Also, the California Standards require students to analyze women's changing role in the 20th century. (CA 11.11)

Background Information

Women have arrived, at last! For thousands of years men defined and controlled female existence. It was a different kind of revolution those women began in 1848. At Niagara Falls, women drafted the Declaration of Human Sentiments. It followed the Declaration of Independence both in style and wording. While the latter emphasized political freedom, the former subordinated the idea of freedom to gender equality.

Neither blood nor extreme upheavals characterized what could arguably be defined as the greatest long lasting revolution of the 20th century. Women faced a long history of sexual discrimination, psychological alienation, economic thievery, and legal blindness. The female identity will no longer be limited to the role of mothers and wives. No longer will women have to fear male judgment. Never again will the woman of the 21st century have to be "the problem that has no name" which wasted the lives of a generation of housewives in the 1950's. The time of women with no choice has come to an end. Which models they follow will considerably affect the future of the United States.

Nowadays, women are the majority of college students. They dictate the "tempo" and conditions to start a family, and they are entering in professions thought unthinkable just a decade ago. And the last gasp of male patriarchy, female sexual objectification, is progressively undermined by a growing number of women's organizations using economic boycott to stop sexism in advertising. In sum, women have a bright future ahead of them to express their identities with minimal male interference.

The picture I portrayed is not too far off from reality. Consider gender equality changes in the past 30 years. Before, the women's movement was for the most part an object of contempt if not of social indifference. Women were portrayed as mainly submissive, impressionable, and highly emotional. It has always been very difficult for men to leave behind the tradition that assigned women a role circumscribed to domesticity; a domain that assigned women the part of "bar tending" male's psychological needs/fantasies.

In this research, I want to revisit their battles for equality, their strategies to gain equal rights, and present some of the great leaders of the women's movement in the 20th century. Moreover, I am also interested about in how five United States Presidents used rhetoric to cope with gender issues. You will not find any mention of the African American women's equal right movement. They indeed shared many similar issues with their Caucasian counterparts. I hope the reader will not either be offended, or think, "here we go again." Very simply, the amount of focus would have required an extended time frame and depth of research on my part that I frankly did not have. My Yale fellows know that time is a banished luxury from our New Haven residence.

Finally, I am restricting the topic of gender equality to find the answers to the following questions: how did Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon's rhetoric help the women's movement for equal rights? What strategies proved more effective to women's agenda? Why did women not link their struggle more firmly to the Civil Rights movement? Furthermore, how did gender stereotypes produce a false female identity? And finally, what were the causes that convinced a large section of women to vote against the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment?

Since FDR, people expect their president to be directly involved in solving the problems of the country. With a few exceptions, presidential rhetoric emphasized morality and patriotism to appeal to people's emotions. Presidents before him, however, interpreted their role as guarantor of the Constitution. They served the Constitution first and people indirectly. They legitimized their power by staying above the "parts."

Appealing to emotions and to the people risked falling into what the spirit of the Constitution tried to avoid at all cost: demagoguery. Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were two exceptions to the traditional role of the President as intended by the Framers. They carried the banner of social reforms that swept the country from 1890s to the 1920s to purify the excess waste and corruption of the Gilded Age. Common citizens wanted leaders who acted on their behalf. The 16th through the 19th Amendments to the Constitution (direct election of Senators, establishment of an income tax, prohibition of alcohol consumption, and women's suffrage, respectively) are the tail end of a unique period in U.S. history that resulted in a more open and fair democracy. It was within this framework that T. Roosevelt and W. Wilson interpreted their power as a reflection of the people rather than of the Constitution.

Both Presidents were elected to reform government. They relied on unprecedented popular support. Their Presidencies were forceful, activist, and drove the major issues of the time such as child labor and legalization of unions, immigration initiative/recall/and referendum. They shifted the power of government from the legislative to the executive branch of government. T. Roosevelt said it best: "I acted for the common well-being of all our people, unless prevented by direct constitutional or legislative prohibition." (1)

Let us see how T. Roosevelt acted in this unprecedented period of reforms on the issue of women's rights.

Theodore Roosevelt

In his senior essay examination at Harvard University, Roosevelt contended that in a marriage, "there should be the most equality between the two sexes." (2) His thought acquires even more depth if we considered it was conceived during the Victorian Age when the cult of domesticity was the norm. Women were considered a male property with a few civil rights if any at all. By 1880, the women's rights movement was still in its infancy and restricted to a few upper-class educated Caucasian women. Reconstruction had just been abandoned in the South and the Gilded Age had just moved its first steps. T. Roosevelt also had the potential to address the gender gap due to his volcanic, greater than life dynamic presidency. He was the first president of the 20th century to believe the president had the "duty to do anything unless such action was forbidden by the Constitution." (3) He anticipated the age of Presidential Rhetoric. Like Wilson afterwards, T. Roosevelt embraced the idea of mandate to use popular appeal to pressure Congress to adopt his policies. The 1906 Hepburn Act, which regulated railroads, is a case in point. By going "over the heads" of Congress and against his party he took his Square Deal directly to the people. He toured the country to gather support to regulate railroad corruption. He engaged time and again throughout his Presidency in moral rhetoric to awaken popular consciousness to "fulfill a moral purpose" tuned to Presidential ideas. His example will be crucial to inspire all presidents to come to use the executive office to intervene in matters of public domain "for the common well-being of all [American] people... In whatever manner was necessary." (4)

Everything would seem to be in place for women to finally take great and fast strides towards emancipation with such a strong, determined President using morality to reform society. Why, then, did he neglect an issue he clearly and passionately embraced before he became President? One reason is that Roosevelt's agenda was stretched among big projects during his Presidency. Abroad, he was engaged with American expansionism in the Pacific ("speak softly and carry a big stick") and the building of the Panama Canal. In domestic affairs, he acquired trust-busting fame by bringing big business under government regulation (Square Deal), and conserving the environment. Certainly, he had a greater than life will to get things done his

way. Roosevelt had changed the government from being an engaged observer of events to a government that solved social problems, no matter how controversial they were. He began the tradition of leading by executive order. For example, the seven Presidents preceding him used executive orders fewer than 100 times, all combined. Roosevelt issued 1,006 executive orders throughout his presidency. (5) At the end, he neglected issue of women's equal rights right at the time when he could have had an impact on the subject. His lack of action grossly contradicted his views about female equality when he was a student and later on as New York Police Commissioner.

Undoubtedly, Roosevelt had a sincere commitment to the cause of women as he clearly demonstrated up to the time of his election. After all, he did not have any hesitation to include them in his Moose Party Platform during his bid to the 1912 Presidency. Yet, he did not seize the moment to advance the female agenda when he had a chance as President-elect.

Why Roosevelt did not act on the issue when in office may find an explanation with the reality of the presidency. A president representing the country must follow a strategy that allows the implementation of as many items in his agenda as possible. Let us face it: women did not have connections inside the White House. They were still relying on moral and fairness principles to get things changed. Their political activism was in an infant phase. Politicians seldom are willing to risk their effectiveness and political "survival" without any tangible gains boosting their leadership. Women's equality simply did not have enough popular support to entice Roosevelt to commit to the issue. Imagine if President Obama tried to implement at the same time his health reform along with a sweeping, comprehensive immigration bill. It is easy to see how the introduction of the new topic could distract, if not damage, his overall presidential agenda.

In a nutshell, Roosevelt's was a new Presidential breed. His rhetorical approach envisioned a presidency that could do anything that the Constitution did not forbid. He was not shy to go "over" the head of Congress anytime he needed to boost his vision of government. In 1905, he used moral language to rationalize government regulation of corporations. He spoke of justice and fairness to denounce the formation of class warfare. Moral ground allowed him to stand above corporate and union rights, capital versus labor. As a result, he claimed a detached vantage point that allowed him to claim that government should "strive to keep... justice alive in this country." (6) But, he had his own limits on how far he was willing to go with certain issues.

Even the most powerful presidents cannot always be true to their beliefs. Competing social/economic interests must be carefully evaluated to maximize presidential ability to persuade citizens and Congress. Given the impossibility of convincing everyone, presidents must learn how to "dance" without losing balance. Political ups and downs happen at every turn a President takes. Roosevelt, as energetic and popular as he was, could not have changed thousands of years of female stereotypes and social order. Meaning is not a matter of individual choice, only. It depends on the way the system works as a whole. Our effectiveness greatly depends on how we fit with everyone else. Meaning does not change people's minds by itself. It must represent the discursive reality of the whole to be effective. Roosevelt lived at a time when patriarchy was not questioned but by a few well off educated Caucasian women such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Society assigned women the role of house protector, child educator. Their function was integrated with the ideas of purity, innocence, and frailty. Any attempt to change this order of things would have been considered deviant.

So, why did he not make use of the executive order strategy to open up opportunities for women like he did for other issues? Competing interests, more than a betrayal of the "cause," played a major role in his decision to neglect women's rights. Theodore Roosevelt was confined by the limitations of his own era.

Woodrow Wilson

After Roosevelt, another progressive president sat at the White House. Hopes were high. Dancing around the topic continued, though. Wilson's rhetoric was both practical and visionary. He did not hesitate to bring about sweeping changes in the field of tariffs, finances and corporate influence. He saw himself as the embodiment of public welfare. Also, he did not hesitate to use idealism as a rhetorical device to push through his 14 points at the Peace Treaty of Versailles in 1918, the creation of the League of Nations was his vision for a "new world order" based on peace and cooperation among the nations based on justice for all. Although he believed that the President was "the only voice in national affairs," he would not show the slightest concern for women. (7) Furthermore, for all his idealism about a safer world he displayed a cold and distant interest for the female majority of the population since his early days as a professor at Bryn Mawr College. Wilson was "unhappy and uncomfortable in a women's institution." (8) He left in 1888 after three years of teaching. It is difficult to understand such a contradiction between his genuine concern about justice and his neglect of women's social inequalities. His mockery of women's political involvement will show later on during his 1912 presidential campaign trail when he stated to one of his staff member that "women's place was in the home and that type of woman who took active part in the suffrage agitation was totally abhorrent to him." (9)

True, the 19th Amendment was drafted in 1919 while Wilson was in office. In reality, though, his change of heart was more the result of a political calculation than a sincere belief in women's rights. As we will see, he did eventually support women's suffrage. It might have been that women had already been granted voting rights in many of the Western states by 1912. Besides, Wilson needed all support he could gather to join the war in Europe. He modified his position on women when it was clear that Congress would have granted voting rights with or without Wilson's support. One reason women successfully won the right to vote was that they proved themselves during the war. They earned male respect for being an efficient and reliable working force while the "boys" were fighting in Europe.

Wilson had all the ingredients to improve the female condition: shining idealism, a sincere sense of justice, and a belief that Presidential rhetoric should lead Congress by leading public opinion. I would argue that Wilson, unlike Roosevelt, brought to the Presidency typical male prejudices that overshadowed his rational, compassionate side.

Common male ideology relegated women to the domestic sphere to create a refuge from the cruel outside world. The rational that biology as well as the will of God infused humans with determined characteristics was widely accepted. Essentially, women's role in society was one of innocence, honesty, submissive, educator, and above all guardian of the family. If we turned the clock back in time, we would realize how citizen Wilson reflected the popular discursive reality of the time which presented women as whimsical abnormalities if speaking out for equality. Wilson reflects this state of mind when describing a Women's Congress meeting for the advancement of women in Baltimore: "a severely dressed [woman], an old maid from the straightest sect of maid... a living example of what might be done by giving men's place and duties to women." (10)

Suffragettes uncovered another of Wilson's inconsistencies about women when they criticized him in 1917 for making the world safe for democracy yet deny them the vote. By the way, keep in mind that ultimately Wilson suspended his patronizing attitude towards women when, on the eve Congress voted to amend the constitution, he made a last minute plea with the Senate to pass the 19th Amendment. Wilson considered women for their femininity and love for the family. He was, of course, a man of his times. Males often believed that ideals of service and sacrifice for the family belonged exclusively to women. After all, the overwhelming

majority of women hardly contested a reality that forbade them from voting, serving on juries, receiving economic as well social recognition such as access to higher education and equal pay.

Eleanor and Franklin D. Roosevelt

Government will never be the same after Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency. The Great Depression increasingly got worse under Hoover's presidency. FDR did not have anything left but to try to use direct governmental intervention to reverse the effects of the Great Depression. We all know the end of the story. WWII ultimately terminated the greatest economic misery in the history of the country. Predictably, the President had too much on his "plate." Economic disaster, war in Europe and the Pacific, and racial riots in Detroit and Los Angeles made it impossible to even consider how to address women's rights. However, in the middle of this madness the President took two steps that had a beneficial effect on women.

The first one was to nominate the first ever woman to a presidential cabinet position (Frances Perkins as secretary of labor from 1933 to 1945). The ensuing close relation with the executive office of the President will be the most important link women needed to push their agenda from within rather than against it. This will become obvious by the time Kennedy established the President Commission on the Status of Women in 1963. The second decision was to listen to his wife's suggestions about equal rights for women. Seldom has a wife of a President played such an important role.

Suddenly, women could count on a powerful ally opening the doors to executive position for qualified women. When her recommendations were ignored, she held press conferences to inform female voters to speak up their minds. Some of the most important recognitions of women's rights included better living wages, better labor conditions, and union's rights. Unemployed women during the New Deal had an opportunity to contribute to their family finances by joining organizations like the She-She-She camps and inclusion in Federal programs such as the National Youth Administration and the Federal Arts Programs.

Eleanor Roosevelt linked the historical women's movement for equal rights started in 1848 with the Declaration of Sentiments to the second wave of feminism that gathered strength in the 50s after the publication of Simon de Beauvoir's seminal work *The Second Sex*. Her husband could not have possibly advanced such a controversial topic such as women's equal rights in the midst of the country's greatest economic depression and most destructive war in human history. The First Lady, however, shifted away destructive critique of the President by becoming actively involved to promote concerns of women, and opening government started a network among professional women. It will come to an age in the 1970s when the number of women's organizations representing their interests will be reflected in a growing number of elected women to important government positions.

It appears as if male presidents are always too busy to tackle the issue of women's equal rights in the 20th century. Certainly, this was not a problem for the Presidents in the 19th century. Sometimes, I like to envision them holding a copy of the Constitution and while reading it they are waiting for that perfect moment to reassure the country about the legitimacy of the work being done by the two Houses. Simply do not take sides. The funny thing is that it took a woman to show how much can be done for the advancement of racial and gender justice even in the middle of crisis of Biblical proportions.

John F. Kennedy

By the time JFK became president, women still lagged behind in most of the fields they had been trying to change since the 19th Amendment. One may ask why women did not change federal or state policies at the ballot. After all, women are the majority of the population. A concentration of their vote should be sufficient to win elections of political candidates supporting women's rights.

There are many reasons this change did not occur. For instance, just because women won the right to vote does not mean that they would vote in large numbers. Family tradition, marital influence, and a lack of political expectations also played an important role. After all, the same reasoning could also apply to low and lower social classes among not voting males. Though the majority of people in any given society are not wealthy, laws typically benefit the upper class. Besides, it would be hard for everyone to be involved in decision-making activities without motivations. Why vote if things never change? The creation of the President's Commission on the Status of Women to report directly to him was done by executive order to avoid any Congressional interference. The ladies had landed in powerful territory. Never again would they have to picket the White House, go on hunger strikes, or parade on the streets. From now on, they would simply report to the President and voice their opinions directly to him. Executive Order 10980 was the turning point for the women's movement.

President Kennedy had his plate full, though. The Cuban missile crisis, the Cold War expanding in Indochina, and the explosive issue of race once again proved fatal for women's hopes. Kennedy was not particularly interested in the advancement of women's rights. Yet, his executive order sheltered the Commission from future neglects at the highest level.

Lyndon B. Johnson

Lyndon Johnson took the helm of the nation in the most dramatic circumstance, Kennedy's assassination. The aftermath was a footnote to Kennedy's agenda devoted to halt communist expansion around the world and to moving forward civil rights legislation. And he took it to the next highest possible level.

Seldom in the life of the country had a President tried to do so much all at once. By 1964, he had a liberal majority in both houses and took full advantage of it. By appealing to moral responsibility, he convinced the country to embrace change by taking decisive steps to end segregation and racist laws. Similar to T. Roosevelt's support for the Hepburn Act, Johnson used moral principles to "sell" the 1965 voting rights. He was the architect of "Great Society" legislation that was in scope similar to FDR's New Deal domestic agenda. Abroad, he stepped up American involvement in Vietnam. Perhaps, Johnson was driven by ambition to leave behind the greatest presidential legacy in U.S. history. Or, maybe he did not have many choices to avoid unresolved problems from the past, all converging to the same point and at the same time. Johnson envisioned the Presidency as the engine driving the government.

Johnson was also the first president to carefully consider how to get maximum media exposure. In his 1964 State of the Union speech, he used short paragraphs and filled with catchy phrases like "we have come a long way. To finish that work that I called for a national war on poverty." The obvious popularity of the statement was a rhetorical device aimed at putting pressure on Congress to accept presidential leadership. The speech was not written for Congress. It was developed for popular consumptions. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. would claim that Johnson exceeded all the previous Presidents in adopting inherent and exclusive presidential authority

and creating the Imperial Presidency. The Presidency was so directly involved in every aspect of the political life of the nation to the point of exceeding its constitutional limits.

Johnson's legacy on women's rights is tied to the 1964 passage of Title VII that forbade sex discrimination in employment. In effect, it succeeded mainly for the hard work of the National Organization for Women more than anything else. He promised a lot but did not quite deliver. At the beginning of his presidency, he did not keep his initial promise to hire fifty women to high Federal level positions. While not hostile to women's rights, his position on the issue is more the result of political calculation. Certainly, he fulfilled the role of voice of the people. He definitely covers many of the roles historian Clinton Rossiter described to belong to the president (chief of state, commander in chief, executive, legislator, party leader, and chief diplomat) (11); perhaps, women's lack of unity among their many groups magnified Johnson's over commitments in domestic and foreign policies. At the end, he was a victim of his own over extended presidency. He would not accept the Democratic Party nomination for the 1968 presidential election.

Richard Nixon

Richard Nixon surprised everybody when he became President. Considered as a conservative figure, he pursued unexpected reforms in welfare, civil rights, and environmental policies. Even more surprising was his favorable position on women's rights. The stark contrast between Nixon the man and Nixon the politician escaped logic. Individually, he was conservative; as a politician, he was in some ways a progressive. During his first term, Congress passed Title IX that prohibited sex discrimination in schools receiving federal funds. Moreover, Nixon approved many more anti sex discrimination provisions to federally supported programs. Nixon would systematically identify and consider women like no other president in the past for presidential appointments. The Talent Bank for women was the first time involving the White House and female outside groups. This would prove to be an extension to Kennedy's National Committee on the Status of Women shaped to involve all the most qualified women in the country for high-ranking positions in government. We tend to think about events in terms of their visibility and immediacy. Yet, change many times comes without a fanfare. And the Talent Bank is a case in point.

Perhaps one explanation for Nixon's progressive social agenda stems from the upheavals of the 60s. JFK, Malcolm X, MLK, and Robert Kennedy were assassinated within five years of each other. The last part of the 60s was a generational battleground. Plus, the Vietnam War inflamed and divided the whole country. Reconciliation could have been Nixon's first step to bring a sense of balance to the country. In many ways his Imperial Presidency-like rhetoric benefitted many social programs. He promoted affirmative action and funding for minority owned businesses and African American colleges. Moreover, massive desegregation in the South happened under his supervision. He never made a speech strongly endorsing civil rights. Along those lines, he only went as far as to endorse voluntary desegregation but not integration. With all his imperfections, though, Nixon reflected the changing mood of the country towards women's social inclusion. Strange as it might be, his social agenda on women's rights is one of the most outstanding of any previous President.

Birth of the Women's Rights Movement

In the absence of public support, presidents very seldom take the initiative to support unpopular issues. The constant work of the women's movement was important to build the necessary support among people for women's suffrage, at first, and for female equal rights later on. The roots of female activism date to 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton provided the necessary leadership to denounce women discrimination. Their main objective was the right to vote. However, the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1869, which gave the right to vote to black men, split the movement. Susan B. Anthony and Cady Stanton refused to endorse the amendment, as it did not recognize the right to vote for women. They formed the National Women's Suffrage Association. The group worked at a federal level and also called for property rights. It is worthwhile to remember inheritance and property laws did not include provisions for women. Lucy Stone led the moderate wing of the women's movement. The American Woman's Suffrage Association tried to secure women's property rights at the state legislature. The two groups will eventually merge in 1900 and they will successfully work to pass the 19th Amendment. This time their communal goal was to exploit stereotypes about their immunity from corruption, guardians of family values, and concern with local issues to prove their vote was necessary to promote the reforms of the Progressive Era.

Even after the 19th amendment, women had the legal status of a minor. Women could not own property neither could they initiate a divorce. And the fact they could not make will, sign contracts, and bring law suit in court without her husband's permission deprived them of any possibility to follow an independent path. Even more disturbing was male success in creating an artificial female consciousness by which women looked at themselves through the lens of others. That is, women internalized the male definition of what it means to be a woman. Between 1920 and 1930 more than 22 percent of the total labor force was female. Before World War I women were concentrated in domestic service, agricultural labor and the clothing trades. During World War I, new opportunities opened for women in manufacturing and office work. After the war, women gave their industrial jobs back to returning soldiers. Yet, women preferred when possible, to hold onto clerical jobs even if wages were low. This pattern will repeat through WWII. Women were forcefully fired from the jobs they held throughout the war to accommodate the returning male soldiers.

The Flappers were perhaps the most noticeable change among women during the 1920s. They were the prototype to the sex revolution of the 1960s. Typically, flappers worked in offices during the day to turn into provocative women at night. They wanted to shock males with behaviors considered outrages for the time. They smoked, drunk, and wore skirts over the knee. In the long run, though, they did not contribute to the advancement of women. As soon the Great Depression struck, the Flapper phenomenon dissolved to become a colorful moment in female emancipation.

It must be said that there had been women before the Flappers who left a model for generation of women to be proud and reminded that women should indeed have full equal rights. Victoria Woodhull had an extraordinary life. She ran for President of the U.S. in 1872 for the Equal Right Party. She also was the first female millionaire. I want you to reflect on the point that women's efforts constantly opened doors for new opportunities. In 1884 and 1888 Belva Ann Lockwood run for President of the U.S. for the Equality Party. Moreover, she was one of the first female lawyers of the nation. Even more impressive was being granted to practice in front of the Supreme Court. Far from being a subservient entity, I doubt all generations of women to come would have found the confidence to expand women's expectations and nurture greater ambitions.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman predicted that female economic independence would lead to the elimination of

gender social constructs: "Pictorial art, music... society, everything, tells her ...that all depends on whom she marries. (13) She understood that money buys more than material objects. Female economic dependence based on male support sets in motion a state of intellectual and emotional development. But, there are further implications due to a lack of economic self-sufficiency. Women would be forced to seek social acceptance and conform to male social mores. No wonder women took comfort in a "golden ring" that meant economic stability and psychological protection. The price that women had to pay for economic dependence was loss of identity. Her argument echoes in Betty Friedan's seminal work *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963. If in the past women was active protesting or picketing now the idealized woman was confined to the narrow roles of mother and housewife. "The problem that has no name" is in fact the result of a life spent with no stimulus and opportunity to develop one's personality.

The concept of oppression is mostly used to refer to class and racial exploitation. The instant that Perkins linked gender to oppression, I argue, was the fundamental piece needed to unveil the contaminated female identity. No doubt, she was ahead of her time. Her theory that economic independence allows women to question the whole patriarch structure based on symbols, habits, tradition will find vindication in the 1970s with the adoption of Title IX. Sam Gompers, head of the Socialist Party and Presidential candidate numerous times for a good reason, echoed Perkins' main theme when he stated in 1898, "a declaration of political liberty which does not involve an opportunity for economic independence is delusional." (13) The best way to understand how power works in society inevitably points to people in power. And Owen Young sums it up for all of us: "Here in America we have raised the standard of political equality. Shall we be able to add to that full equality in economic opportunity? No man is wholly free until he is politically and economically free; no man without adequate wage is free." (14).

The 1920s were a decade of great economic expansion. It was also the decade where women could vote for the first time. Time and again the female role in the novel depends on whom she marries. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy, despite her love for Gatsby, marries Tom Buchanan for money. His wealth is enough to keep Daisy from leaving him though he is a philanderer and has no respect for Daisy. Myrtle' character presents a woman who wanted to have a glamorous life. Married to a mechanic, she does not have the skills or education to change her life. She will accept an abusive relationship with the wealthy Tom Buchanan. The only woman who has some sort of Independence is the one who earns her own money, Jordan does not display any neediness and dependence on men that Daisy and Myrtle have.

Women in the 20s were supposed to reach new heights with voting rights and relative access to more jobs. Instead, Scott Fitzgerald seems to remind everyone that a lack of access to economic independence will create a false illusion of reality and/or will force women to lose their identity.

With such a complex world entering a new age full of ambiguous messages, it is crucial that our next generation of adults enter adulthood with a reasonable understanding of their person. Neil Armstrong claimed space exploration for humanity; Francis Perkins unlocked female consciousness to economic emancipation.

Growth of Women's Rights (1920-1950)

The three decades following women's suffrage consolidated their confidence. Ask any woman and you will hear the same song promptly served to you: "there is nothing that women cannot do." Note how the word "women" is used in its plural form. It conveys unity as unlimited confidence. The way they say it reminds me of: we've arrived, move off the way and get real kind of songs. Women would not be content until full equal rights were granted. The next three decades would be important to keep building public support and presidential attention.

The years between the Great Depression and the 1950s were seemingly uneventful. The noise, protests, and activism slowed down only in appearance. In reality, another battle loomed on the horizon. Alice Paul, the force behind the passage of the 19th Amendment, began working on a constitutional amendment (Lucretia Mott Amendment) in 1923. On the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Seneca Falls Convention, it called for absolute equality between men and women throughout the USA.

The Flappers of the 1920s added color and excitement to the movement. Susan B. Anthony as well as other famous activists died in the decade. Fewer members joined the two major women's parties: PWA and NASWA.

Women in the 20s forcefully pushed for Prohibition laws. Not surprisingly only a few women were elected to office. As Gilman feared, the right to vote was important but it did not alter the socio-political structure of power. Either due to lack of political interest, marital influence, or lack of interest women's right to vote made a substantial impact when they began demonstrating for salary equality beginning in the 70s. In the 21st century, the female bloc helped to elect Barrack Obama. And, it will continue to be a voting force with tremendous influence on any political election. After all, women are the majority of the population.

I need to bring to attention another factor for the slow progresses of the women's movement in the 1930s until 1960. Two factors impacted the progress of women. Two catastrophic events that got all the unconditioned attention of President Roosevelt: the Great Depression and WWII. Both events were all absorbing. No President could have been able to escape the pull of the largest and longer economic disaster in USA history the most destructive war on the planet. True, FDR elected the first-ever female Secretary of Labor (1933-45). The President had too much on his plate by 1939. Historical events would prove too desperate for the leader to try radical experiments when people who starved and kept the country safe. The Cold War of course was the other factor halting women's rights.

The Development of Feminism and the ERA (1920-1972)

What does it take for a President to support women's right? The trend seems to suggest the more dominant the office of the President becomes, the less will and focus he has to address those issues who might damage him either politically or publically. The women's movement for equal rights increased its chances to effectively have legislation drafted only when it finally had an opportunity to directly engage the executive office. Furthermore, the vast resources of the executive office also simplified the connection and collection of data about qualified women for public office. So, the replacement of local female organizations by a national network supervised from the top was the major shift that the second wave of feminists found in place by mid

60s.

While the first feminists focused mainly on voting and property rights, the second wave of feminism enlarged their demands. All inequalities, social and economic, plus a vast range of needs (sexuality, reproductive rights, access to professional careers) were on the "table." Moreover, women started defining their identity by questioning male traditional assumptions. For instance, women started redefining their relationships with the "male" world. Sport, the military, divorce laws, domestic violence, and on the issue of rape that men dismissed too lightly entered daily public awareness.

Then, how did all this come about? Obviously, this change did not happen overnight. It had been the steady and inspired work of leaders like Mott, Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Charlotte Gilman who gave a voice to all future female generations. Women earning male respect in WWI and II provided an identity that could not be tarnished by male chauvinism. In this dimension women occupied the domestic sphere but she was deprived of her intellect and aspirations outside of the house. The cult of domesticity "ordained" women to live without an identity and revolve around male's needs. Instead, I want to bring the attention to two books which inspired women to rebel against the matrix of the suburb and of motherhood. *The Second Sex* is what the title suggests. Women are not equal to men. They are inferior. The detailed analysis of women's oppression helped women to honestly question the order of things. It also inspired a book written by Betty Friedan about a seemingly inexplicable phenomenon shared by many women. They felt something was missing, empty in their lives *The Feminine Mystique* provocatively named the symptom "the problem that has no name." This book struck a chord with many women who recognized the limitations of being a housewife though they lived in material comfort and enjoyed a relatively happy family life. This is the springboard which catapulted scores of women towards the discovery of a new identity and careers outside of the house.

Unquestionably, by the end of Nixon's first term, Presidential rhetoric faced demands and expectations undreamt of at the time of Kennedy's establishment of the President's Commission on the Status of Women. One may argue that perhaps women could have been more successful if they had united with the civil rights movement. Exactly as 100 years before, it was social mores and political interests that did not allow the "marriage" between the two movements to be consummated. Both times, race relations had the green light over gender. Afraid to lose momentum, the Civil Rights movement made the conscious decision to move forward alone to avoid a socio-political backlash.

The Equal Right Amendment was initiated in 1922 by Alice Paul. It followed fifty years of unstable trajectory. Many reasons can be found to explain its failure to be adopted. Wars, economic depressions, and male attitude converged to keep women to the role of fulfilling the patriarchal domestic project. It is surprising, though, that women themselves did not agree on the amendment. In fact, in 1972 the Equal Right Amendment ran out of time mainly due to lack of female support in the states. Why did the ERA fail?

For almost fifty years, women wanted to add an amendment to embed their equal rights into the Constitution. It is quite extraordinary that it failed, considering that women make up 51% of the population. By 1970, there was a kind of satisfaction among male and female social components. The main proponent of the Amendment, the National Organization for Women, did not have a historical perspective of the events to count on. Since Kennedy, every president and First Lady welcomed the Equal Right Amendment. It only looked like only a matter of time before the few states needed for ratification would join the bandwagon. In reality, the amendment failed because it threatened too many interests such as the Mormon Church and insurance companies. Many legislators would not have "anything to lose by voting against ERA because enough voters in their districts were against it" (15)

For once, ERA supporters were not organized on a state-by-state level. They did not consider regional splits (the South never forgave anti child labor laws of the past), different ideologies among women (some were afraid to destroy family integrity and women who already worked outside of the house were too busy to make ends meet). (16)

Southern voters were very receptive to that message and they added some on their own. For instance child labor laws never "washed" with Southerners and black women felt they were left out. The Women's Equal Rights Movement was traditionally white and educated. It historically never made any effort to include their African American Southerner counterpart. By 1960s National Organization for Women splintered out of internal disagreements and parties. This would prove fatal later to motivate enough state legislatures to vote for ERA. Great struggles end for complex reasons. Motifs can be understood only with historical perspective. The ERA tale ended a decade of exhaustive events such the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights, and the Watergate scandal. These cultural shocks progressively swallowed both ideological and popular enthusiasm for the success of the measure. Among the many contentions dividing pro and against the amendment two issues seemed to top the list: fear women could lose preferential treatment at work and in courts; and Schlafly.

The former suffered from sort of confusion in the minds of many women. 1964 Equal Pay Act, 1967 Title VII, 1972 right to abortion casted a sense of comfortable independence among many women. Though women felt an equal rights amendment would be the icing on the cake, many of them felt that changes would threaten rights women greatly wanted to keep. Schlafly skillfully played on those fears. She masterfully argued that, "ERA was the men's liberation amendment." She masterfully played on women's fears that the Amendment would mean sexual permissiveness, legalization of gays, change in children's custody law, losing flexible hours at work and military service.

She opposed modern feminism. She successfully used a moral rhetoric that inked the ERA with extreme feminism.

It is worthwhile to remember that there is always apprehension in changing old and established routines. At the end, many women accepted Schlafly's underlying assertion that women are housewives by choice. The old motif of family and home stability carried the day once again in a supreme act of irony.

Strategies and Activities

What makes students pay attention? I believe that students learn best when they are in charge of their own learning. Students remain more involved when they work together to find answers they relate to. I see the figure of the teacher as one who supervises and validates students' outcomes. My main goal is to foster curiosity in students by using a variety of methods that activate as many senses as possible.

Adolescents respond better than adults to pleasure and reward. The social media has built a commercial "empire" on those two concepts. Academically, I hope to exploit teen's "appetite" for anything promoting their sense of individual empowerment and interests they have outside of the school. I aim at integrating students' interests with academic knowledge. For example, I will explain the meaning and importance of rhetoric by analyzing how Tupac's lyrics about life have convinced so many teenagers to look up to him as a role model. (Appendix 1)

Neurologically, the brain releases dopamine, which is a chemical providing feelings of enjoyment. Medical research contends that it motivates a person to proactively perform certain activities connected to rewarding experiences. In other words, individual interest is characterized by the amount of familiarity and accessibility required by the subject. My plan links students' interests outside the classroom to the academic material they are required to master. I paired my content in the essay to Teachable Moments sections devised to present different themes about gender and presidential rhetoric. Historical events are to be linked to real life moral/practical situations. Students will prove their answers, solutions by working out questions from real life events. This is an example to clarify my approach.

In the first week of instructions about women's equal rights movement two questions will trigger students' involvement: can the individual keep all his values without compromising his/her real life objectives? Students will be given a real historical problem to solve. They first will work in groups to decide a set of values. Then, they will have to anticipate what situations in life might undermine which values might be dropped. Each group will have to explain their reasons by convincing other groups. Now that value system and rhetoric themes are introduced, students will compare their group work to explain reasons for Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson's contradictory rhetorical stand on women's equal rights.

Before students are asked to analyze the Constitutional powers assigned to the president, students will write and create their form of government. This class discussion will "slide" on the soundness/danger of a political system where the president enjoys growing power over the legislative branch. The duties of the three branches of government and the main phases of the presidency (constitutional, rhetorical, and imperial) will provide the background to explain how the individual values of the two presidents did not overlap their political decisions. (Appendix 2)

I consider this first five days of instructions important to teach students how to learn, how to respect their ideas to become aware of the importance of participating in society for the betterment of it as a whole. Within this logic, the Socratic method will be my main vehicle to involve all students' active participation. Like in the old Greek polis, students will verbalize the concept of the individual as crucial element to improve the quality of life of a community. Historical events and the analysis of the three branches of government will ground students' theories to reality.

Socratic method, group active collaboration, brainstorming or heuristic learning methodologies share the characteristic of being students' centered. Learning takes place by asking questions, challenging students' assumptions, and real life experiences.

In other words, students are actively involved because they are given the role of producing meaning. Teachers begin and finish the whole discovery process by stimulating the conversation, keeping students involved, and ensuring that students' outcome is correct.

Eleanor Roosevelt was an amazing woman involved in many different fields to help groups of people pursuing equality under the law. She fought against racism. She was also adamant about women's rights. What distinguished her from other women married to powerful politicians was her aggressive stand for women's equal rights. She is a shining example of how to find motivations to change people's lives. Students will have to confront one of the most popular trends among students: intellectual and academic laziness. This time, students will face the theme of motivation to change for social justice. For five days, students will be asked to verbalize, share, and write about their personal experiences. By reading excerpts from Eleanor Roosevelt's biography and *the Great Gatsby* students will be expected to analyze their positions in society, first. Then, students will be given five days to produce a five page comic strip addressing the following themes: 1. Eleanor

Roosevelt and her influence on her husband. 2. Why most of the women in *the Great Gatsby* accepted male psychological and physical abuses.

3. The role of money to carve male and female roles in the novel. 4. What makes Jordan different from all the other female characters. 5. The importance and limitation of women's suffrage before and after 1920.

The last five days of lessons will begin with a system that compresses lots of information in a short amount of time to grab students' attention. (10 minutes on three consecutive days). Though impossible to absorb the enormous quantity of details, its intensity will eliminate distractions. This is the time where the teacher has control in the classroom and establishes the kind of atmosphere promoting a competitive focus that students will use to "ingurgitate" the information to store it at the subliminal level. This compression methodology will then leave space to activities aimed at working out the events since the 1950s.

The next step is to develop an environment around students reminiscent of their daily exposure to mass consumerism, as nowadays students for the most part lack motivations and academic interest. Academic material must be presented/introduced as a material for academic "consumption." For the last five days of the unit, students will work out solutions to explain what changes people's points of view/prejudices. Students will be taking notes about oral and power point presentations I will deliver for two consecutive days, 10 minutes each day. Within groups, students will discuss a set of questions to find answers explaining why and how change occurs through time. (Appendix 6) Students will use the remaining class time of each day to produce a five minute video on political and female leaders due on the following Monday. Homework will be used to consolidate classroom content and factual information such as uses of rhetoric, timeline of women's events from 1960 to 1972, and reasons why the ERA lost political and popular support. A series of in-class mini essays will conclude the unit. Students will explain the reasons and events that changed presidential rhetoric and popular perception about the role of women in society. (Appendix 7)

Appendices 1-5

Teachable Moment: of beliefs and reality (1)

Both Wilson and Roosevelt's contradictory examples about women give me an opportunity to help students how to make decisions. My students do not do well academically as they could. They do not know how to make effective choices. Roosevelt and Wilson acted out to maximize their leadership. My students will find useful clues by analyzing how and why the two presidents prioritized their beliefs. Students will begin to learn what real life principles they are prepared to "trade" to reach their objectives.

Teachable Moment, of boredom and laziness (2)

The two most used words students in my school use are: I don't care and I'm bored. I want students to experience how rich life is if only individuals look at themselves as agents of change. Hopefully, they will incorporate in their lives the idea that life needs to be lived not watched.

Teachable Moment, of leadership (3)

The experiences of L. Johnson and R. Nixon raise the question about personal ambitions. Students will be

invited to reflect about what values are mostly important to lead a country.

Teachable Moments, *The Great Gatsby*: of identity and stereotypes (4)

The topic of identity is universal. To begin a discussion about gender similarities, differences, and stereotypes can prove to be one of young adults' most important learning moments. An open and sincere dialogue at this age has great advantages since they are at that age they can engage topics at a deeper level. They still retain that willingness to speak openly about their emotions. Through dialogue and discussion of the first wave of women's rights movement all students can benefit enormously about how they see each other. Analysis of the role of women and of economics play in *The Great Gatsby* will provide everyone with a neutral zone in which historical events can be tested. This part will work best if taught together with an English teacher. If not available, the main themes of *The Great Gatsby* are easily available on the web site.

Teachable Moment, of social awareness and political support (5)

This is one of the most important reasons I decided to share this topic with the students. Young adults have grown accustomed to individual easy satisfaction. Money has replaced effort. Teens expect life to be easy and pleasurable; entitlement has replaced appreciation. Girls must know where their social independence, economic freedom, and self-definition come from. Reflecting on all those changes through time will give both boys and girls a better sense of their identity. Since 1920, women increasingly demanded more civil rights such as access to professional careers, equal pay for similar job, and an Equal Right Amendment to the Constitution. Students will cover how human needs and awareness expand with time.

APPENDIX 6

What is the function of human rights? Which rights do people need? Why and how do they need to be changed? What are the pros and cons of fast/slow reforms?

APPENDIX 7

What is the purpose of rhetoric? What would be an effective manner to convince people that marijuana should be legalized, same as alcohol? How did women change their roles in society between 1920 and 1970? What kind of rhetoric did presidents use between 1960 and 1972? Why?

United States History 11th grade California Standards

11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American Society.

1. Discuss the significant domestic policy speeches of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton.
2. Describe the changing role of women in society as reflected in the entry of more women into the labor

force and the changing family structure.

End Notes

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My very favorite. Though written a long time ago, it delivers wise lines. Easy to read, it carries lots of meaning. The Mozart of political science!

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