Third Place Fiona Morris

The Women's Movement Is Not Over

 Susan B. Anthony once said “Failure is impossible”. She made this bold statement during a time where women were bitterly oppressed, and women in American were fighting for the right to vote. They were struggling to gain a voice not only for themselves, but for future generations to come. They knew that not only was failure impossible, it was not an option. Anthony and the women who fought alongside her succeeded in that women gained the right to vote, but they also succeeded in that their cause for equality was taken up by generations of women to come, so that it could never die.  It is in this way that they ensured that failure was impossible. As long as a cause worth fighting for is alive in just one person, failure is impossible. Now, in the year 2020, when the plight of women is still very much alive, it sometimes may seem that the women fighting for equal rights in the 1800s did fail. However, the same courage and persistence that lived inside Susan B. Anthony lives inside millions of women today. Today’s women around the world are still repressed. Wage gaps, harassment, legal restrictions and a number of other issues still plague women in their day to day life. Although the fight for equality for women around the world may at times seem hopeless, the cause is still one worth fighting for and, as long as one women is willing to stand up, will never fail.

 Women have been oppressed for thousands of years. From the beginning of civilization, women have been recognized as less than their male counterparts. In the 1700s, women were seen as their husbands property under the law (The Gilder). In the 1800s, they could not vote. In the 1900s, they were paid unequally. After thousands of years, one would think that the situation would be resolved. But sadly, that is not the case. Today’s women still face issues such as the wage gap, trafficking, and unequal protection under the law. For example, in Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive (Dewey). In Morocco, rape victims can be charged with a crime (Dewey). In America, for-profit employers can deny women contraception coverage in their healthcare if the employer has a religious objection to contraception (Wolfe). When forced to recognize the challenges women across the world still face, it is easy to feel as though we have failed. At times, the women's movement may seem like a lost cause. If we are not able to accomplish what so many generations before us have tried to after all this time, maybe it is an impossible feat. However, we must recognize the fact that we are still fighting. The fact that we are still fighting proves not that the challenge is impossible to solve, but that failure is impossible. All that’s needed for a cause to succeed is one person who believes in it.

 Women around the world are proving that the cause for equal rights for women is still very much alive and well. There are many organizations around the world working to increase the rights and opportunities for women. Organizations such as Girls not Brides work to end the tradition of child marriage that puts over 8 million girls in a marrige when they are underage each year (Humphries). She should Run is an organization devoted to putting more women in government offices (Humphries). For the first time in American history, there were two women on the democratic ticket for the presidential nomination. In these ways and many others, the cause for equal rights for women is still thriving and gradually succeeding.

 However, if we are ever to accomplish our goal, we must not let the issue rest. We must continue to push for women's rights around the world and not be deterred by those who would have us believe that the issue is solved, because it isn’t. Susan B. Anothony said that the only thing that could make your dream impossible was the fear of failure. That is why it is so important that we not allow ourselves to become overwhelmed by the scale and weight of the history of the issue, but rather keep in mind the broader picture of what we are fighting for. There are those who grow tired of hearing about women’s issues and wish for those advocating for women to be silent. But we must not be silent. We must keep raising our voices, especially when we are told to quiet down. For what if Susan B. Anthony had been silent? Would an 18-year-old girl be able to eagerly register to vote? Would two woman candidates be able to debate ideas on a presidential stage? We must keep educating girls on the history of suppression of women around the world so that they know and are inspired by the generations of women before them who made it possible for them to live the life they do now. And most importantly, we must remain steadfast in our cause, and never forget that all we need is one passionate person to change the world.

 I was always proud to be a girl. From a very young age I recognized the stereotypes and gender roles around me, and I sought to defy them. Now, I still hold the values about equality for my gender as dearly as I did when I was five. I see the injustice that still remains around me and am eager to be a part of changing it. And as long as we have leaders willing to fight for equal rights, women ready to stand up for what is rightfully theirs, and five-year-old girls yearning for the courage to change the inequalities she sees around her, failure is impossible.

Works Cited

“The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Advanced Placement United States History Study Guide.” *The Legal Status of Women, 1776–1830 | AP US History Study Guide from The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*, 8 Nov. 2012, ap.gilderlehrman.org

/essay/legal-status-women-1776%C3%A2%E2%82%AC%E2%80%9C1830.

Humphries, Monica. “It's 2019 and We Still Don't Have Gender Equality. These 8 Groups Are Fighting to Change That.” *NationSwell*, 26 Aug. 2019, nationswell.com/womens-equality-

day/.

Wolfe, Lahle. “A List of U.S. Laws That Limit Opportunities for Women.” *The Balance Careers*, The Balance Careers, 20 Nov. 2019, www.thebalancecareers.com/us-laws-negatively

-impact-women-3515759.

Dewey, Caitlin. “Analysis | 7 Ridiculous Restrictions on Women's Rights around the World.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 27 Oct. 2013, www.washingtonpost.com/news/

worldviews/wp/2013/10/27/7-ridiculous-restrictions-on-womens-rights-around-the-world/.