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### Emerging Roles for Women

Before the women's rights movement, women across the world were subject to the unlawful oppression of their male counterparts, all because of their gender. Now, this does not seem fair in the slightest, and much to our liking this is not nearly the same today. Women were seen as the traditional stay-at-home mom, expected to bear children and raise a family while their husbands stay at work all day. This ideal family is now rather uncommon nowadays, as women have strode past this stereotype and held many different types of jobs. Traditional roles within the household are being adjusted as families strive to work together for a better living, as a whole not just the male head of the house. The capabilities of women have not changed since the days of Stanton, Johnson, Vaughan, Jackson, and Brady, but the laws about it have. Women's suffrage was a very large achievement for women, and this was one of the first steps to gaining the equality that women deserve. The single story of women has changed since pre-suffrage times because everyone can no longer remain oblivious to the storm known as women. People now are able to acknowledge the wealth in women other than bearing children and weaving the local tapestries. Women were only seen as one thing in these times, so our slow changing of the ideal women has evolved over the years. The single story of women has adapted to no longer fit one woman, and the progress women continue to have made with all of their rights is tangible today.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was one of the key pioneers to the eventual granting of many women's rights and is responsible for bringing this large issue to the nation's forefront. The start of the women's rights movement can basically all be accredited to Stanton, as this brave young housewife and mother was accountable for gathering a group of strong women to draft up a list of grievances, to be the basis of their convention. This list, the "Declaration of Sentiments", featured 18 reasons how women are being denied the egalitarian rights that their founding fathers fought just 70 years prior for in the American Revolution. By creating this document, women were bonded by their want for these seemingly fundamental rights they were being denied. She claims "The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her" (Stanton). By utilizing our nation's most powerful symbol of liberty, the "Declaration of Independence" as a framework for her resolutions, she was able to connect this important movement to something bigger and more respected. While the document was tied to such an esteemed one, some of Stanton's claims were still able to be recognized and 12 resolutions received unanimous endorsement. The complaints that follow the documents' release are completely understandable, as many people were unable to see Stanton's claims as legitimate and abandon the conservative mindset of their time. The idea of a woman voting was a shock to many and most people were not ready to accept the change that was coming for them. Regardless of the controversy surrounding the "Declaration of Sentiments", the Women's Rights Convention successfully got women stirring and had begun the long 72-year campaign for women's suffrage.

The success of the nation-wide Women's Rights Convention and the gaining of suffrage still affects our nation today, and the pioneers behind this movement inspired many other brave women in generations to follow. Specifically, the 2016 movie *Hidden Figures* highlights the

extremely intelligence possessed by three African-American women working for NASA during the 1960's. This time was increasingly difficult for women of race because this happened to be pre-Civil Rights Movement. While women had now been given the ability to vote in 1920, many of women of all races were still faced with discrimination and prejudice from their colleagues and neighbors. The women in this movie are seen struggling to revise the common gender roles that they have stereotypically been facing. Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson all are able to use their intelligence and strength to fight to the prejudice and single stories that many of their coworkers had come to believe. These women are all shown facing unnecessary hurdles that they would not have to face if they were their white, male coworker. For example, Mary is forced to petition a judge in order to attend engineering classes at the local segregated high school that would ultimately allow her to become an engineer at NASA. This would prove no problem to another, but the fact that she is a black woman somehow gives this case enough merit to be tried in a court. Dorothy brilliantly states that "Separate and equal are two different things. Just 'cause it's the way, doesn't make it right, understand?" Many people jump so quick to judge them just due to the their skin color and gender, but, the mathematician, engineer, and computer programmer were able to shatter the single story about women their coworkers' initially believed.

As women gained more rights and respect through the years, their roles have changed with them. While a housewife may seem like an ideal job, perfect for a woman with a family, it is not the job for all. Many women are capable of many special talents that cannot be sheltered by a husband and family. The stereotypical housewife is no longer the norm, but in Judy Brady's essay, "I Want A Wife", she writes of the many benefits to having a housewife in the 1970's. Basically, being a housewife is being a slave to your family, for the reasons of love for your

husband and kids. While slightly an exaggeration of a wife's common roles, Brady was able to describe the many daunting tasks a woman is expected to complete and follow, all because they are wed by a marriage license. When a woman gets married, she loses much of her freedom to make individual choices and is forced to consider the well being of her family and her husband before herself. The woman's submission to her husband by marriage does not always need to be the case, as many women are able to manage jobs while both parents are responsible for parenting their child and caring for their home. Realistically, in the United States 46.8% of our entire workforce, which is very close to equal distribution (Fetterolf). The stereotype that women have been burdened with to become a housewife is just no longer relevant. The urban households we have today are far from traditional, and women around the world are making headlines and continuing to break free of their standard stereotypes. The stereotype that a woman is supposed to be a doting, "sympathizing" and "nurturing" wife is outdated and no longer is able to describe all women (Brady).

The single story of a woman has changed immensely since Stanton's time, and I think will continue to change based on the impact of women in our society. Brady's essay and the movie "Hidden Figures" show how much our impressions on women have changed, and we can physically notice the difference between the treatment of women then and now. Women's rights have been a topic of discussion for over a century, though now we face many different hurdles than they would have. Women across the country faced stereotyping, discrimination, and prejudice over time and fought through this in order to gain the equal rights we have today. Women were effective in creating a united movement which was able to last long enough to gain equal rights for all and inspire freedom from the standard woman's role.

## Works Cited

<p>Brady, Judy. "I Want a Wife." <i>Current Issues and Enduring Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking and Argument, with Readings</i>, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. Eds. Sylvan Barnet, Hugo Bedau, and John O'Hara. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2017. 754-755. Print.</p>
<p>Fetterolf, Janell. "In Many Countries, at Least Four-in-Ten in the Labor Force Are Women." <i>Pew Research Center</i>, 7 Mar. 2017, <a href="http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/07/in-many-countries-at-least-four-in-ten-in-the-labor-force-are-women/">www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/07/in-many-countries-at-least-four-in-ten-in-the-labor-force-are-women/</a>. Accessed 27 July 2017.</p>
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<p>Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions." <i>Current Issues and Enduring Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking and Argument, with Readings</i>, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. Eds. Sylvan Barnet, Hugo Bedau, and John O'Hara. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2017. 655-657. Print.</p>