



A Different Woman's Purpose

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"Modern invention has banished the spinning wheel, and the same law of progress makes the woman of today a different woman from her grandmother." - Susan B. Anthony

My grandmothers were born without the right to vote. They were both young widows, single workingwomen who never remarried. They raised their children on their own as well as assisted other members of their families. They did not have microwave ovens or McDonalds.

My maternal grandmother, an immigrant from Germany, rode the bus to work every night where she worked as a cleaning lady in office buildings in the city. She always wore a dress and baked the most awesome oatmeal raisin chocolate chip cookies.

My paternal grandmother, Irish American, learned to drive and she worked as a secretary for the city. I don't remember her baking; she wore mostly pantsuits and in her later years wore hats made of feathers.

They both lived their lives in rented apartments and neither had their own washer or dryer. I don't remember ever having a conversation with either of them about pay equity or a living wage. I don't know if they ever thought about it. They never took me to work with them. There was no "Bring your daughter to work day".

Women's Liberation was not a topic of conversation. "Feminism" was not a word in their vocabularies. They were both independent women who worked within the framework that existed at the time in order to provide for their families. I do believe that was their sole purpose. I loved them both dearly. As I age, they are more and more endeared to me. They accomplished so much with so little. I owe them much in the shaping of my life and my purpose.

They were working single mothers who had childcare issues, housing issues, equal pay issues, and personal safety issues. As young women and widowed mothers, they did not have organizations or educational assistance programs devoted to women. They did however attain the right to vote unlike their grandmothers.

August is the month in which we celebrate "Women's Equality Day". On August 26, 1920 the 19th amendment granting women the right to vote was certified as part of the U. S. Constitution. Referred to as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, it states "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or

by any State on account of sex.” The U. S. Congress designated August 26th as “Women’s Equality Day” in 1971 to honor women’s continuing efforts toward equality at the behest of Rep. Bella Abzug (D-NY).

Anne Morrow Lindbergh said, “I believe that what a woman resents is not so much giving herself in pieces as giving herself purposelessly.” Our grandmothers and the women who have gone before us like Susan B. Anthony, Gloria Steinem, Maya Angelou, Oprah Winfrey, Ruth Moss Easterling and others have worked on purpose to provide a better quality of life for their daughters and granddaughters. It is up to us to tend to the road they have paved and blaze the new trails still needed.

Unfortunately, many of the same issues our grandmothers faced still exist today. Pay equity is still an issue, but there are other serious issues as well. Many working women are not reimbursed for training classes taken outside the workplace, nor are they afforded the time off to attend them. Many workplaces do not offer training to entry-level managers or supervisory skills training on the worksite. A livable wage is still a battle to be fought as well as affordable insurance, healthcare and funding for women’s health research.

We are different women than our grandmothers and we have an opportunity to live as different women serving our purpose. The way is easier today, though we still have miles to go.

Celebrate and ensure that we will see equality in our lifetime. Educate yourself and others, know the issues, attend a debate and VOTE. Get involved. Learn about the resources available for women. Do not tolerate violence against women – in thought, word or action. Teach your sons to respect women and your daughters to respect themselves.

Together as different women each with our own purpose, let’s work to improve the quality of life for our families and achieve true equality now.

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