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REFLECTIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE 19TH AMENDMENT AT 100

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CLEFFI-TRISTANI: 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.

Welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria, the podcast about ideas and the experts who have them. I'm Emily Cleffi-Tristani, Senior Advisor for Strategic Communications at Brookings, and your guest host for today's special episode on the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the text of which I just read.

One hundred years ago this month, the 19th Amendment was ratified, guaranteeing women in the United States the right to vote. It was a key milestone in a long march toward greater gender equity in this country. But, its implementation wasn't perfect, as the promise of representation was not equally realized across racial and ethnic lines.

Even today, with the presidential election on the horizon, there are serious problems in access to the ballot box for segments of the American population. And, it has become clear that relative equality at the ballot box has not led to equity in other facets of American's lives.

On today's episode, we asked women at the Brookings Institution to share their thoughts on the 19th Amendment, and I'm pleased to share their insights and reflections with you here. For more in-depth analysis and commentary about gender equality in America and the world today, visit our 19A Gender Equality Series on our website at Brookings.edu/19a. In the series, Brookings scholars, public officials, and other subject area experts analyze how gender equality has evolved since the

19th Amendment's passage and forces that have kept them from reaching true equality.

The Brookings Cafeteria Podcast is brought to you by the Brookings Podcast Network, which also produces Dollar and Sense, the Brookings trade podcast; The Current; and our Events podcast. Follow us on Twitter, @policypodcasts, and visit us online at Brookings.edu/podcast. And, now, reflections on the current state of gender equality as the 19th Amendment turns 100.

AARONSON: My name is Stephanie Aaronson and I'm the Vice President and Director of the Economic Studies Program at Brookings. When I think about the 19th Amendment, I think not only about the bottom line, women finally being able to vote, to exercise the fundamental act of our democracy, with all the rights and responsibilities that entails, but I also think about the struggle that was required to achieve the vote. That right was won by women of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds only after decades of struggle.

Before I was an economist, I was a History major, and I like to think about the suffrage movement within the context of all the activism that women have engaged in throughout our history, which has reshaped our society and moved us closer to the ideals of our founding.

To indulge in a little history, the suffragist movement grew out of women's activism in the abolition movement, and it was linked to movements working for child welfare, workplace safety, and moral reform. And, after the right to vote was won, women -- Black and Brown women, especially -- were active in the civil rights

movement, out of which grew the second-wave feminist movement. And, more recently, we have seen women paying a key role in our ongoing efforts to expand civil and economic rights, including, at this moment, in Black Lives Matter.

In fact, the struggle for the right to vote itself wasn't a one-time battle. Black and brown women have had to fight to exercise that right since the passage of the 19th Amendment. And, even today, franchise is not assured in practice, regardless of what the law says.

The suffrage movement also holds lessons for us today. Although women from a variety of backgrounds fought for suffrage, it was not an inclusive multiracial, multiethnic, nonracist movement. I say this not to hold our foremothers to today's standards but to acknowledge their weaknesses and learn from those shortcomings of that movement so I can improve my own work for economic and political equality today.

Since the 19th Amendment passed, women have made huge strides in their efforts to be full political and economic participants in our country. Of course, I've been very excited by the nomination of Kamala Harris to be vice president, only the fourth woman and first women of color to be nominated for one of the two highest positions in our government. Nonetheless, a lot of work remains to be done.

But, when I look to a more perfect future rather than any very specific goals, I think about what I want for both my children, one girl and one boy, and for all children, which is that they can become who they are meant to be, who they want to be, without limitations imposed by their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or

physical ability. For this future to come true, all children need a solid economic foundation to secure their success, and this necessity helps motivate me in my work as an economist.

KWAUK: My name is Christina Kwauk, and I'm a Fellow in the Center for Universal Education here at Brookings. To me, the 19th Amendment was a turning point for women in America when it came to the long path towards gender equality. But, reflecting on its centenary also means remembering the countless women who were excluded from this progress, in particular Native American women, African American women, Asian American women, and many others who did not fit the legal and cultural definitions of what it meant to be an American woman.

But, imperfection doesn't mean that we shouldn't appreciate what the 19th Amendment did in terms of opening the door for the great number of steps that were taken thereafter. This includes extending the fight for gender equality here in the U.S. to the fight for gender equality around the world.

Today, more women than ever are being educated. Women have actually become more educated than men in many countries. But, there are still nearly 130 million school-aged girls who are not permitted the opportunity to go to school or to continue to 12 years of basic education. And, it's estimated that an additional 20 million girls will be excluded from returning to school once we reach that elusive post-COVID world.

Gender equality does not mean girls in some places get to go to school while other girls in other places to not. It doesn't mean that some girls are told that they can

be the president of their country or be an astronaut while other girls are told that their only value lies in the husband they secure and the number of children they bear.

Gender equality doesn't mean that girls are told that they're bossy while boys are being told that they can be leaders. What it does mean is that we value girls as equal human beings and that our political systems, our social structures, our physical and material infrastructure and our cultural values are designed with them and for them in equal mind.

What passage of the 19th Amendment did for women in the U.S. a quality universal education for girls around the world can do for all women on this planet. It will open the floodgates to progress for gender equality because girls will have the ability to acquire the knowledge, the skills, the social networks, and the opportunities afforded to boys and men.

Like the women and men who trailblazed for women's suffrage here in the U.S., there is a vast global network of women and men who are trailblazing for gender equality in and through education. I have had the privilege to work with many of these individuals through the Echidna Global Scholars Program at Brookings, women and men who are working in extremely hostile environments, to ensure girls in their countries have the opportunity to get a quality and empowering education and to have the same opportunity as their brothers to pursue a career of their own choice.

So, thinking about the 19th Amendment in this context makes me hopeful that through U.S. leadership and diplomacy and through our support for these

modern day suffragettes, we can make sure girls and women in other parts of the world don't have to wait another 100 years until they are afforded this same rights and opportunities that women in the U.S. are able to today.

WELCH: My name is Morgan Welch, and I am a Senior Research Assistant and Project Coordinator in the Center on Children and Families within the Economic Studies Program.

The 19th Amendment was a huge milestone for American women, granting them the right to vote and giving them the role in social and political life that would lead to greater equality in work and family life. A hundred years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment, women earn more bachelor's and doctoral degrees than men, and in recent years have started to make considerable gains in fields that historically men have predominantly occupied, such as Mathematics and Engineering.

In January of 2020, women held more payroll jobs than men, and although it has declined in recent years, women's labor force participation has risen nearly 25 percentage points since 1960. Today, 72 percent of women with children are present in the workforce.

While the 19th Amendment can be seen as a catalyst that gave women the ability to vote, which empowered them to make considerable political and social gains, it represents only the first hurdle in the long race to gender equality. Yes, it is a milestone to be recognized, and, yes, women have made great progress as a direct result. However, to blindly celebrate is to ignore that women of color, in particular

African American women, were kept from the polls by widespread discriminatory voting practices and laws that would not be lifted until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and that are still present today.

So, in reflecting on its passage a hundred years later, we must recognize the deep gender inequalities that persist. The underrepresentation of women in political leadership, a gender pay gap that just won't seem to close, and an imbalance of household and childcare work, all issues which, of course, intersect and are exacerbated across racial and ethnic lines.

The bottom line? The 19th Amendment cleared the first hurdle, but there are many more hurdles in the way. A perfect example of this is the struggle to pass a Paid Family Leave policy in the United States. Even though women make up nearly half of the workforce, and a majority of two-parent households now consist of dual earners, childcare and household duties continue to fall disproportionately on women.

The lack of a federal Paid Leave Policy not only makes it incredibly difficult for women to advance in their careers and balance family and work, but it presents the very real risk of permanently detaching women from the labor force after the birth of a child. A Paid Leave Policy would bring us one step closer to addressing the systemic issues that keep women from advancing in the workplace.

So, when will we know that we've achieved gender equality, and what exactly does that look like? For me, we'll know when we live in a society where women no longer have barriers to power, representation, influence, success, and

decision-making.

As a young woman who not so long ago entered into the professional world, I feel the weight of future planning and decision that I know my male counterparts do not. When is the right time to start a family? How will this impact my career? Do I add too many exclamation points to my emails? Removing these barriers would mean creating, supporting, and passing policies that make it easier for women to get ahead.

I think we'll know when we've achieved or at least come closer to gender equality when practices and norms that better suit men don't feel like the default. Paid leave is only one example of the countless hurdles that lie in the way. It may seem far off, but every hurdle we pass gets us closer to the finish line.

LIU: Hi. This is Amy Liu, Vice President of Brookings and Director of the Metropolitan Policy Program. To share my thoughts on the 19th Amendment and gender equality, I want to start with a story.

When I came to Washington in my 20s, I became good friends with a super smart, ambitious young man who remains a good friend today. He had already achieved all these major professional milestones by the time I met him, including being recognized on the cover of a magazine in his youth.

He told me that one key factor for his success was he had the benefit of male mentors. In fact, he proactively sought out mentorships from accomplished men he admired. I was in awe of his story and the strong relationships he had forged which opened up his opportunities.

I was frankly envious. I wanted the same thing. And, as an immigrant growing up in the Midwest, I just had fiercely become hardworking and self-sufficient. It never occurred to me to seek out the mentorship of a woman. So, I started to think about the women I admired, those who had positively influenced me and who I would then seek out as a mentor.

This was especially important because my mother passed away when I was young. So, finding a female role model became an important personal quest. In the end, I came up blank. This was my first awareness of women in leadership, or the lack thereof.

Now, to be fair, there were women in leadership positions around me, but they were few, where my friend was surrounded by so many options. I didn't have a female supervisor at the time, and few leaders were mothers when I wanted help navigating the choices of women with demanding careers and family, and few were women leaders of color.

Now, if you fast-forward today, I'm excited to be recording this podcast when women are making powerful inroads in national public service. A young woman today looking for female mentors would certainly not have the hard time and the challenge I had over 20 years ago.

A woman recently ran for president, for instance. A new generation of women came into Congress in the recent mid-term elections. We may have a female vice president soon. And, at Brookings, which itself is considered a Washington institution, women make up half of the leadership team here and half of the staff

overall. It's an exciting time of progress.

Yet, a hundred years after the passage of the 19th Amendment there is still so, so much more work to be done to build the ground game for women to reach higher office or to serve in leadership positions in communities across the country.

I have the privilege of working with multiple leaders on a regular basis. There is no doubt there are some very exciting female mayors leading big cities. Think Mayor Lori Lightfoot in Chicago, Keisha Lance Bottoms in Atlanta, Nan Whaley in Dayton, Ohio, and Muriel Bowser in Washington, D.C. Yet, these women make up only 27 percent of mayors running the hundred largest U.S. cities.

And, according to the U.S. Conference of Mayors in September 2019, of the 284 cities with more than 100,000 residents, only one in five are led by women mayors. That's just 21 percent, when women make up more than half of the nation's workforce. And, beyond elected office, society benefits when women lead key civic institutions that shape the priorities of local communities and regions, yet only 30 percent of colleges and universities are run by women.

Even though these institutions serve as major employers and anchor institutions in most communities, and anecdotally I find women run many wonderful foundations, social service organizations, or other nonprofits, but very few women lead CEO groups, public-private partnership organizations, or other economic developmental business entities that are influential and shape the wealth-creating parts of the local economy.

Gender and racial diversity in civic tables, frankly, remain a real problem.

While I believe male leaders do care about making an economy that works for everyone, I do think women leaders naturally center people and community in the civic and policy agenda.

So, I never did find my female mentor, yet the fault was mine. I was too narrow in my search. However, I hope the young women today take cues from the many women leaders surrounding them, to exert voice and influence in the spaces they are desperately needed. Given the statistics, we need more women. We need more women to transform institutions of influence and to advance the consequential laws.

REYNOLDS: My name is Molly Reynolds. I'm a Senior Fellow in the Governance Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. When the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920 it was an important step towards women's political equality in the United States, a momentous step but only a step, nonetheless.

The politics that brought us the 19th Amendment were complex and began long before ratification a hundred years ago. There are some states where women had full or partial voting rights before ratification in 1920, and there are states where women of color remained excluded from voting for decades after ratification. The women whose contributions to the fight for ratification are recognized most often were White, but Black women played vital roles in organizing for and advancing the cause.

Montana had sent the first woman to Congress nearly 4 years before the ratification of the 19th Amendment, in 1916, but it took until 1993, after the so-

called Year of the Woman in the election of 1992, for women to comprise more than 10 percent of the House of Representatives. They make up roughly a quarter of the House and a quarter of the Senate today. The Speaker of the House and 30 percent of House committee chairs are women, including three women of color.

This representation is vital. Political science research tells us that female legislators work more actively on issues like social welfare policies and women's rights. Data also suggests that women in the minority party, now who have Republicans in the House and Democrats in the Senate, emphasize coalition building that allows them to move bills further through the legislative process, despite being at a partisan disadvantage. The female legislators have also been shown to be more responsive to constituent requests from their male peers.

Continuing our work for women's equality means continuing to bring more women into the political sphere. But, even as we celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the 19th Amendment, we are reminded of how precarious each victory in the fight for women's political, social, and economic equality is.

Representational gains can be reversed. There are, for example, fewer Republican women serving in the House and the current Congress than in several previous sessions. Research demonstrates that legislation on women's issues face systematic obstacles in working its way through Congress.

Efforts to make it more difficult for Americans, especially in communities of color, to participate in the electoral process threaten the ability of voters to send the representatives of their choice to Washington. And, the COVID pandemic, with its

disruptions to schooling and childcare, threatens to roll back decades of women's economic progress. Black women have been especially hard hit by job losses.

When the Washington Nationals went to the World Series in 2019, Washington, D.C. was awash with signs that implored the city's baseball team to "finish the fight." That phrase echoes in my mind on this hundredth anniversary of the 19th Amendment. We should remember ratification as a fight finished and ask ourselves what fight to take up next.

LEWIS: My name is Robin Lewis, and I am a Senior Research Associate and Associate Fellow in the Governance Studies Program at Brookings. When considering what gender equality looks like to me, I was reminded of a few simultaneously inspiring and disheartening photos from the Elle UK's #morewomen campaign.

You may have seen these photos re-circulating recently on social media and Photoshopped before and after style images. Men are removed from scenes of various high-profile, political, creative, and business settings. Once all the men are deleted, it becomes strikingly clear how few women are in the picture.

While the campaign characterized itself as playful, the reality is, of course, also sobering. It's one of many reminders that we have more work to do when it comes to advancing gender equality, and not just in high-profile spaces but at all levels.

As we commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the 19th Amendment's passage, it's important to evaluate the progress we've made toward gender equality

and the steps we still need to take. A 2017 peer research survey found that while the vast majority of Americans agree it's important that women have equal rights with men, about half of respondents said the U.S. still has work to do when it comes to gender equality. I certainly count myself among those Americans who believe further progress toward gender equality is needed.

So, what does gender equality mean? For me, I think about gender equality in terms of equal rights and opportunities across the board for all genders, whether we're talking about economic opportunities, political engagements and leadership, education, or health care. And, it's not just about the existence of those rights and opportunities. It's the ability to pursue them safely and with dignity.

In my work at Brookings, I've spent some time thinking about gender equality through the lens of financial inclusion, which essentially means access to and usage of affordable quality financial services. In the United States, we don't have a sharp gender gap in terms of certain financial inclusion indicators, like the percentage of men versus women who have a financial account. Yet, we're certainly not exempt from gender inequities when it comes to other indicators of economic opportunity more broadly.

Take the gender pay gap. Based on census data from 2019 on median earnings for full-time, year-round workers, women in the U.S. made about 82 cents for every dollar paid to a White man. If we look at the intersection of race and gender, the gap gets even bigger. For example, Black and Latina women make about 62 and 54 cents respectively for every dollar paid to a White man. The wage gap is

unfortunately just one aspect of many systemic racial inequalities in our society.

When it comes to voting rights, for example, we know that disenfranchisement of Black and Native American women continued long after the passage of the 19th Amendment. And, in fact, the issue of safeguarding voting rights remains a salient national conversation.

On a personal note, I grew up in Montgomery, Alabama, often known as the birthplace of the civil rights movement. Montgomery's history exemplifies the struggle toward equal rights, including the leadership of many courageous Black women in that struggle to end racial discrimination, segregation, and disenfranchisement.

As we commemorate the passage of the 19th Amendment, we've recognized an important but incomplete step toward gender equality and reaffirm the work that remains to welcome more women of diverse backgrounds, expressions, traditions, and identities into the picture.

SAWHILL: I'm Isabel Sawhill. I'm a Senior Fellow in Economic Studies at Brookings, and when I think about the 19th Amendment, I think about my mother. She was 17 in 1920. Even though she was from a reasonably prosperous family, she never completed high school. In later years, she used to joke about this fact, but I always saw it as one reason that she never achieved her full potential.

There were many women like my mother. They were led to believe they didn’t need a lot of education, because they were going to be wives and mothers and be taking care of by their husbands.

My mother smoked cigarettes, about a pack a day, but she was not allowed to smoke when she visited my father's family, and that was a huge problem for her. She had to hide her cigarettes and then find places to smoke where they couldn't see her. She also wore a corset. I used to watch her trying to wriggle into it. It looked very, very uncomfortable.

My father made all the important decisions in the family. He liked the wilderness and took my mother to an isolated cabin on Lake Huron every summer. She hated it there and called it Little Alcatraz. But, she didn't have much choice, and for her it was a kind of prison.

I mention my mother because I don't think the youngest generation has any idea how women were treated or expected to behave in the 1920s. Even when I was a young adult, women earned less than 60 percent as much as men. There were still Help Wanted: Male and Help Wanted: Female job ads in the Classified section of most newspapers.

Needless to say, most of the jobs opened to women were low paid and routine. I began my own career, in fact, earning the minimum wage in a clerical position. I managed to escape the typing pool by going to school at night to earn a PhD and was the only women in most of my classes.

With that as background, I have to say I'm quite amazed by the progress that has been achieved over the last hundred years. I have actually lived through most of it. Do we need still more progress? Of course. We need more childcare, more paid leave, more reproductive choices, and most of all, more women in leadership

positions. I especially hope to see a woman as president of the United States in the next decade. But, there's good news, too. Corsets have actually gone the way of the dinosaur.

DEWS: To learn more about the evolution of gender equality in the past and present, visit our Gender Equality series at Brookings.edu/19A. Also, on Monday, August 24th, at 2 p.m. Eastern, Brookings is hosting an online event on gender equality 100 years after the 19th Amendment, featuring keynote remarks from Tina Tchen, President and CEO of Time's Up, and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Register to watch live on our website or visit after the event to watch the tape.

I'm especially grateful for the participation of Emily Cleffi-Tristani in not only introducing this episode but also in helping produce it by coordinating with all the women who shared their stories and policy ideas. My thanks to all of them -- Stephanie Aaronson, Christina Kwauk, Morgan Welch, Amy Liu, Molly Reynolds, Robin Lewis, and Isabel Sawhill. Thank you for the work you do to make this country and world better.

I also want to thank two other women for inspiring this episode format, my friends Sarah Stewart Holland and Beth Silvers, hosts of one of my favorite non-Brookings podcasts, Pantsuit Politics. Back in the spring, as Coronavirus erupted across America and the world, Sarah and Beth aired episodes titled *Kids and COVID-19* and *Stories from Work*, featuring voices from all kinds of people sharing their experiences with the pandemic. Check those out and their recent series on how

to be a citizen at PantsuitPoliticsShow.com.

Also, a special thanks to Chris McKenna for his assistance in pulling this episode together and for his important work on the Gender Equality series.

Finally, my thanks, as always, to Audio Engineer Gaston Reboredo who makes all of us sound better, and Camilo Ramirez, Andrea Risotto, and Emily Horne for their guidance and support.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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