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What separates women from men? How social movements helped women establish their rights and do we their lasting effect nowadays? Why the lack of social movement and women’s voice can be destructive for our society? In this paper I will try to answer these questions and bring a light on challenges that modern women faced and are still facing every day.

I’d like to begin with a political role of women in the US, since it clearly presents the current state of women rights and influence. The United States of America have always been a traditionally patriarchal society. Unlike other countries, which are considered less progressive and open-minded like India, Pakistan or even limited recognized states as Transnistria, United States never had a woman on a ruling post.1 Despite the emergence over the past ten years of high-profile women in politics, such as Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Clinton, and Sarah Palin, the gender gap in political ambition is virtually the same as it was a decade ago. When the 112th Congress convened in January 2011, 84 percent of its members were men. The percentages of women office holders presented in Table 1 demonstrate that it is not only at the federal level that women are numerically under-represented. Large gender disparities are also evident at the

state and local levels, where more than three-quarters of statewide elected officials and state legislators are men. Further, men occupy the governor’s mansion in 44 of the 50 states, and men run City Hall in 92 of the 100 largest cities across the country.2 To find out the reasons of such huge disproportion let’s bring up the topics of the gender role, the position of the woman in the society and how feminist movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s helped to establish and provide essential and much needed rights to women.

Historically the role of women was self-sacrifice. Woman needs to have a lack of personal will; they should be mothers and wives in the first place. From birth till death they are defined by men - they are born with one’s man last name and they take another man’s name after a marriage. Before the rise of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s and the influx of women into the workforce in the 1980s, the prevalent part of the country’s population, if not all, believed in those principles and carried them throughout their whole lives, as a part of cultural heritage, not thinking about any other role for women, than making meals and taking care of children, while waiting for their husbands to return from their jobs. As one woman at the time put it, “The female doesn't really expect a lot from life. She's here as someone's keeper — her husband's or her children's.”3 They were legally subject to their husbands via "head and master laws," and they had no legal right to any of their husbands' earnings or property, aside from a limited right to "proper support"; husbands, however, would control their wives' property and earnings. 4 Another terrible thing was, and sadly still is, an emerging issue of domestic violence and growing number of rapes, which are usually unreported, while juridical system being so conservative that they are lacking proper laws, power and will to defend a woman. A good example is the movie “The Accused”. First of all, I do not consider this movie to be “feminist”, instead, it just shows the events that happen everyday. It truly depicts how women are considered lower than man. Sarah, being the victim of a rape, struggling with emotional and psychological trauma is still struggling to make her word accountable. She is seen as a joke by society. Even though in the end of the movie the case is won, the punishment that rapists and rape supporters were given was truly, from moral and ethical positions, not big enough. And there are thousands of such cases happening every year.

Feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s’ had the main goal of fighting those issues and reconsidering the women’s role in the society. The crime of rape began to assume its contemporary form, sex without consent, both legally and socially. Existing laws were extended to include marital rape and sex when a person is too physically or mentally incapacitated to consent.5 The birth control pill technologically revolutionized control over reproduction, while laws restricting access to birth control and abortion were rolled back, by legislative action and judicial decisions such as Roe v. Wade in 1973. Women decided to fight hard for their rights as they didn’t see any justice for their rights from society.

Equal rights for women meant also meant equal rights for women in color, as they were one of the most unprotected layers of society. Since the mid-1970s, alongside with the women rights movement, a black feminist movement started to take shape. Famous journalists, Alice Walker, Nobel laureate Toni Morrison, Angela Davis, put the problem of dual identity and dual oppression of American blacks. Being involved in the 1960s civil rights movement of African Americans, they have done the same in their ideological way as their white fellow members of the youth organizations. Detection of female marginality situation, not only in the traditionally patriarchal American society, but also in the new liberal conceptions of African-American liberation inevitably led them into the ranks of feminists, prompting accusations of betraying the interests of racial solidarity.  
 The black feminist way of finding female solidarity could not be all simple and smooth. A serious barrier on the way and the main target of criticism was that the experience of black women was not included in the white feminist’s model women's liberation. The concept and practice of both branches of the movement of the previous decades have completely ignored the social, racial and ethnic differences among women. A mechanism created to ensure the equality of the individual, didn’t take into account the exploitation of women from racial and ethnic minorities and lower social classes, thus usually appeared to be not functioning and even worsening the status of these women. One of the most prominent theorists of feminism Bell Hooks wrote in her book about the need not to limit the scope of feminism striving to achieve the same social status as men. Identification of oppression exclusively with male dominance meant, according to Hook, the weakness of the liberal and radical political analysis and hampered the formation of viable strategies. This idea became the key to the formation of multicultural feminism 1980-1990s.

The achievements of the movement cannot be underestimated. It may seem like an obvious statement, but somewhere between earning women the right to vote, pushing through legislation opening up universities to female students and advancing the civil rights movement feminism has indeed made life much better - not just for American women, but American men as well. Feminists have proven that women's rights are human rights. The women's movement has brought women out of the household and into the workplace. Women of color who were already working were joined by housewives in the labor force, which fundamentally changed the economy. Changes catalyzed by feminism have closed the wage gap between men and women from 62 to 77 cents on the dollar, though there's still a long way to go. But feminism should be credited for changing the conversation around what types of work women can do and what they demand to be paid for it. Increasingly, young feminists are starting to take active roles in the fight against violence, as well. The recent wave of activism on college campuses to end rape highlight some of the ways young women are working to protect their own bodies, while creating safe spaces to learn and thrive. Title 9 was also a feminist achievement, which opened up huge opportunities for women, ensuring them equal access to higher education. Today, women make up 58% of college undergraduates — an undeniable improvement in the lives of women everywhere.6 Title IX also protects women from gender discrimination on college campuses. Under Title IX, students are guaranteed the right to an education without sexual harassment and violence.7

So let’s return to the reasons of why women are still so scarcely represented in the government in comparison to men. Our leadership was historically chosen from the 6 percent of the population – white married heterosexual males over the age of 35 with college education and professional degree. A 2001 study revealed that one of the biggest barriers keeping women from emerging as candidates centered around self-perceptions of qualifications to run for office.8 So even after all of those years of equal rights movement, the gender role has its imprint on our so-called progressive society. Consistent with the findings from more than a decade ago, men remain almost 60 percent more likely than women to assess themselves as “very qualified” to run for office, while women are more than twice as likely as men to rate themselves as “not at all qualified.”9

Another viewpoint is that just like with other types of jobs and careers, women are encouraged to stay out of politics because of the fear of what will happen to the families they leave at home. There are stereotypes which lead to belief that women politicians can do no good for their voters when their children are without parental supervision. Without the attention of their mothers, there is a fear that children will become juvenile delinquents or engage in unmoral conduct. Regardless of the credibility of these theories, it is enough to prevent women from running for political office or taking on any other occupation that will keep them from home for extended hours. And after the job of raising the children is done, this will later work against these women in terms of a seniority disadvantage. A result of women entering politics later is that they can never catch up to their male counterparts in terms of seniority. By the time a woman chooses to run, a male that is the same age has already accumulated several years of experience. This is a problem in the United States Congress, as committee assignments are often based on seniority. As a result, women have less chance of becoming part of a committee where their presence can be really influential and widespread.10

What we can see now is that women have competed in presidential primaries and have yet to win presidency. Yet perhaps more promising are women in the global world. Today, the plight of women is significantly improving in the Middle East, especially in countries like Egypt and Afghanistan. Perhaps thanks in part to international interests of the past decade, women are finding more freedom in societies whose male-dominated leadership have vested interest in the suppression of women. Burka laws are easing up in these countries, as Sharia law slowly loses its vice hold on the Muslim Middle East. Thus, women in politics means a lot of things: in a broader aspect, it means giving women an incentive, providing women with the foundations of knowledge and education with which they are able to better combat inequality based upon gender. On the other hand, in terms of gender here at home, the task is somewhat different: it isn't so much social convention which women need to overcome but merely the discrepancies in a system which is more prone towards embracing change when it is found necessary.

In conclusion I would like to say that the stereotypes are no more than a way of placing men above woman. Modern society proves them wrong and demands women to be treated equally, as it benefits the progress, establishes healthy society and nurtures right perceptions of the world in our minds. The lack of women's social movements leads to violence, self-destruction, moral and social cynicism. Socio-cultural equality between men and women is a question of equality of human existence. Society won’t develop harmoniously if it belittled anyone's role, in particular, the role of women as creators and not balanced the ratio of two complementary principles - male and female. It is known that the position of women in society brings out the real degree of civilization of a social community, and also reflects the level of commitment of its members to the principles of humanism and equality. Freedom is a lasting value and fundamental essential characteristic of man. An attack on the freedom of a woman on her right to be a full member of society, the suppression of creativity in it, with the exception of the cultural process negatively affects the development of culture. Feminism, in its sweeping historical, philosophical, religious, political, socioeconomic, ethical aspects, the trends affecting the development of mankind, as the prospects for the future development of civilization, the way of its recovery from the global crisis now has an impact on the change of state of the human community in the direction of humanity.

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