

Has The American Feminist Movement

Stopped Gender Inequality in the USA?

هل الحركة النسوية الأمريكية أوقفت عدم المساواة بين الجنسين في الولايات المتحدة؟

Chiali Amina *¹

chiali.amina2003@gmail.com

Benabdi Farouk ²

faroukbenabdi@yahoo.co.uk

¹ University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Algeria

² University of Mascara Mustapha Stambouli, Algeria

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Abstract: This paper will explain that despite all the positive results achieved thanks to courageous and indomitable American feminists, the latter haven't succeeded to, completely, stop sex discrimination in such fields as the workplace and politics. As a matter of fact, the following questions are discussed throughout this brief research: what is feminism? How did the American women's rights movement emerge? Why did a second wave of feminism take place in the USA? And why does gender inequality still persist in today's America?

Keywords: feminism; gender inequality; patriarchy; sex discrimination; women.

ملخص:

من خلال هذه الورقة البحثية، نحاول ان نوضح انه على الرغم من كل النتائج الإيجابية التي حققتها الناشطات الأمريكيات في الحصول على سلسلة من الحقوق المدنية والحصول على حق التصويت، بفضل التعديل التاسع عشر من سنة 1920، إلا أنهن لم ينجحن في إيقاف عدم المساواة بين الجنسين التي لا تزال قائمة في بعض المجالات مثل مكان العمل والميدان السياسي. وفقا لذلك، تمت مناقشة الأسئلة التالية من خلال هذا البحث الموجز: ماذا تعني الحركة النسوية وكيف نشأت؟ لماذا ظهرت موجة نسوية ثانية في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية؟ ولماذا لا تزال عدم المساواة بين الجنسين قائمة في المجتمع الأمريكي اليوم؟

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحركة النسوية: التمييز الجنسي: الأبوية: عدم المساواة: سلطة الرجال.

* Corresponding author: chiali.amina2003@gmail.com

1.introduction

After a long struggle, gender inequality in the United States has been diminishing throughout its history and significant advancements towards equality have been made. Thanks to courageous women's advocates who led the first two important feminist waves in the United States of America, women have been able to challenge that patriarchal society and to enter the public sphere from which they had been excluded for a long time. White middle class feminists succeeded to push the American government to grant women a series of civil and political rights. One of the greatest achievements of the American feminist movement was the introduction of the Nineteenth Amendment into the American Constitution, in 1920, to grant all American women the right to vote. However, despite this progress, women still experience sex discrimination in the workplace where some of their male co-workers either continue to marginalize them because of their gender or to consider them as sexual objects created to please and serve men. In the political field, too, females' participation and representation are limited, and women are, generally, less encouraged than men to run for office. So, this paper is a tentative attempt to talk about the main factors that pushed American women to organize their own movement, and to show how women were betrayed by their government though they had done their best during the War of Independence, the Civil War, the First and Second World Wars to support their nation, and to prove their capacity to assume certain male roles. It will also show that the American society, in general, and the government, in particular, still believe in those conventional principles based on men's supremacy.

2-The Rise of Feminism

Feminism appeared, first, in such European countries as France, Greece, and Great Britain, then the idea to fight for women's rights and gender equality spread to the United States of America, and some Arab countries like the Middle East. This movement was the result of the existing unfair laws and social beliefs that used to consider all women as inferior, passive and dependent individuals whose place was at home to take care of husbands and children. It was a practice to think that women were unable to get education, unable to have professional careers and unable to participate in political matters.

Gradually, women, all over the world, began to express their discontent throughout the establishment of important female organizations in order to break that prevalent ideology based on men's supremacy and women's inferiority. As a matter of fact, women's rights

advocates started to ask for the right to be educated, the right to have their own properties, the right to have a job, the right to be politically represented and the right to vote. In other words, feminists' dominant goal was gender equality and the opportunity to enter the public sphere, which had long been dominated by men.¹

Feminists also expressed their sufferings throughout writing. In this respect, a great number of female authors could be cited to show their contribution to the rise of feminism. Among them, the French author Jeanne Derooin who wrote an article entitled *Appels aux Femmes* (Call to Women) to criticize the unfair treatment vis-à-vis French women, and to attack that traditional belief which always marginalized women. In Germany, women were encouraged by the author Louise Otto to organize and struggle against sexism. Otto published a weekly periodical, *Frauen Zeitung* (Women's Journal), to push German women to protest against the patriarchal system. In addition to these two writers, it is worth mentioning the famous British Mary Wollstonecraft who had started to ask for the equality of the sexes long before the emergence of feminism as an organized force. She published her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in 1792, to argue that all women should be treated in the same way as men, and should enjoy the same rights. However, her arguments were not supported, at that time, and were soon ignored by society.

In the United States of America, feminism emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century to challenge that patriarchal society they were living in. However, it should be noted that during the colonial and revolutionary periods, American women were looked at differently and enjoyed more freedom because that common discrimination against women was not yet put into practice.² During all these years, American women were not under men's control as was the case in the rest of the world. In fact, those Englishmen, who represented the first permanent settlers of America, needed the help of women to build their new nation, and they usually worked together without making any distinction between males and females. Thus, in addition to their daily domestic chores, colonial American women were allowed to possess their own farms and to manage them freely. Politically

¹ Perry, Lewis, *Freedom, Feminism and the State*, Holmes & Merier Publishers Inc, New York, 1991, p. 1.

² Miller, John C, *This New Man, the American: The Beginnings of the American People*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, USA, 1974, p. 412.

speaking, American women were allowed to be members of political councils and to give their opinions. They were also allowed to speak for themselves in courts of law.

Unfortunately, when the Founding Fathers issued the famous document of the Declaration of Independence in July, 1776 to officially declare their separation from England, and the establishment of their own nation where people should be free and equal, they stated that "all men are created equal", but did not mention the word women. As a result, American women started to feel this discrimination against them, but they did nothing to change the situation because feminism had not yet emerged as a strong force in the United States. The only person who tried to defend women, at that time, and to speak on their behalf was Abigail Adams; John Adam's wife. She believed that women should not submit to laws clearly not made in their interest, and that women should not content themselves with the role of being decorous companions of their husbands. In this respect, Abigail wrote her famous letter *Remember the Ladies*, in 1776, to encourage her husband and, through him, congressmen to include protective legislation for women and not to be very severe with them once the new Republic of America would be established.¹ She, thus wrote

I long to hear that you have declared an independency –and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would *Remember the Ladies*, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have not voice, or Representation. That your sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of

¹ Akers, Charles W, *Abigail Adams: An American Woman*, Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1980, p. 99.

your Sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness.¹

In 1783, the thirteen colonies got their independence, and established their own republic with their own constitution. And, of course, since those American settlers had already lived in England for a long time, they did not neglect the traditional Common Law which characterized their mother country, and they immediately adopted that ideology of men's supremacy in the new American Republic. The Common Law was very severe and considered women as inferior beings. It deprived them of their social, educational, economic and political rights. Gradually, this gender inequality became unbearable and American women, mainly white Middle-Class ones, grew angry and led the first wave of feminism from 1848 to 1920 in order to ask for their civil and political rights.

3. The Emergence of the American Feminist Movement

Thanks to such women as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Lucretia Mott (1793-1880), the American women's rights movement was born. These two white middle-class women, in addition to three other friends, issued a document, known as the Declaration of Sentiments. It was a paraphrase of the American Declaration of Independence, and it asserted that "All men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."² Then, the five ladies informed the women of the surrounding towns about the first female meeting that would take place at the Methodist Church in Seneca Falls on July 19 and 20, 1848. The Seneca Falls Convention became the first meeting, ever called, to discuss the civil and political rights of American women. The latter wanted to transform men's ideas about women, and to free themselves from the masculine tutelage to which law, religion, tradition and custom bound them. Thus, the convention announced:

We shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and National legislatures and endeavour to

¹ Petterson Meyer, Edith, *Petticoat Patriots of the American Revolution*, The Vanguard Press Inc, New York, 1976, p 54.

² Mathew, Jean V, *Women's Struggle for Equality: The First Phase (1828-1876)*, American Ways Series, Chicago, 1997, p. 2.

enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this convention will be followed by a series of conventions embracing every part of the country.¹

Though the idea of this first female meeting was ridiculed by the majority of American men who thought that women's rights were "impracticable, unnecessary, and a monstrous injury to all mankind"², about three hundred persons, among whom forty open-minded men, were present to support women's freedom. As a result, women achieved two important goals. For instance, married women were allowed to keep the properties they had inherited before marriage, thanks to the Married Women's Property Act, and not to give them to their husbands; young girls were allowed to join schools and to be educated. These achievements encouraged women to continue their struggle, and helped the movement to go on in order to gain more rights for women like the right to equal guardianship of children in case of divorce, and the right to sue. Unfortunately, in 1861 the Civil War broke out, and the annual women's rights conventions were suspended to take place at a later time with new claims.

The Civil War ended with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, in 1865, to officially stop slavery in the United States of America.³ The American government was so proud of women's countless contributions to the war effort that it soon allowed them to get higher education, and to receive the same lectures as men at Harvard, Yale and Princeton universities. However, from the political point of view, women were still denied the ballot.

After the end of the Civil War and after a temporary suspension of women's rights conventions, women advocates resumed their work and insisted on the issue of voting for women. For that purpose, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), and the National American Woman Suffrage

¹ Firor Scott, Anne, *Natural Allies : Women's Associations in American History*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1991, p. 54.

² Kerber, Linda K. & De Hart, Jane S, *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1995, p. 213.

³ The Thirteenth Amendment stated: "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction". Norton, Thomas J, *The Constitution of the United States: Its Sources and its Application*, Committee for Constitutional Government Inc, New York, 1960, p. 232.

Association (NAWSA) were formed. Though their leaders opposed each other on the techniques to be used in order to gain the right to vote, their objective was the same.

It is very important to mention that the above mentioned associations' leaders had acquired enough experience from their previous participation in the Abolitionist Movement of the 1830's and 1840's. They had learnt how to prepare petitions and how to organize meetings and speak in public. They had also developed fund-raising skills. The Abolitionist Movement is very often viewed as the forerunner of the American women's rights movement which was transformed into the women's suffrage movement by the end of the nineteenth century.¹ Women's activists did so well that they succeeded to convince a number of American states to grant their women inhabitants full enfranchisement. These were Wyoming in 1890; Colorado in 1893; Utah and Idaho in 1896. The next round of state victories did not come until the twentieth century.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, feminist leaders insisted more than ever on the suffrage issue. They considered voting as an opportunity for women to elect more liberal, pacifist and honest political leaders who would reduce the ferocity of wars, and clean the nation from selfishness and corruption.² For this reason, new female organizations were born. They were the Women's Political Union, in 1907, by Harriot Blatch (1856-1940), the Congressional Union, in 1913, by Alice Paul (1885-1977) and her collaborator Lucy Burns (1879-1966), and the National Woman's Party in 1916. The latter was a coalition of both the Women's Political Union and the Congressional Union. Its leaders decided to use such new methods as carrying banners asking for women's right to vote; demonstrations with stirring songs and pageantry; large parades, and direct militant activities.

In 1917, Alice Paul, and her supporters, decided to picket the White House for the first time. She argued her strategy by saying: "if a creditor stands before a man's house all day demanding payment of his bill, the man must either remove the creditor or pay the bill."³ So,

¹ Minkloff, Debra C, "The Sequencing of social movements", *American Sociological Review*, University of Wisconsin, Vol 62, N 5, 1997, pp. 779-799.

² Current, Richard N, *American History: A Survey since 1865*, Alfred A. Knopf Inc, New York, 1979, p. 632.

³ Hunter, Sally G, "Woodrow Wilson, Alice Paul, and the woman suffrage movement", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol 98, N 4, 1971, pp. 667-680.

for one complete year, well-dressed women stood before the gates of the White House, regardless of the weather conditions, to remind the president of their determination to achieve their aim. As a result, the American president Woodrow Wilson expressed his support for a federal amendment to enfranchise women, especially when he noticed that they had done their best to help their nation during World War I (1914 - 1918). Consequently, and after a long struggle, American women (of all classes and races) achieved their objective when the Nineteenth Amendment was officially added to the Constitution, in 1920, to grant all the women of the United States of America the right to go to the polls.

4. Second Wave Feminism in the United States

Even though American women were granted the civil and political rights they fought for, gender discrimination continued to characterize the American society; The fact that led to the rise of another wave of feminism, during the sixties, and which lasted for two decades. While the first wave focused on both education and enfranchisement, the second one emerged to discuss a wide range of new issues among which the workplace, sexuality, family, domestic violence, and reproductive rights.

Before dealing with the second wave of feminism in the United States, it is worth mentioning the very important role that American women played during World War Two. When the United States of America entered the war – after the bombing of Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941 – countless technical, medical and administrative roles needed to be filled in order to replace American men serving abroad.¹ Therefore, the American government created a propaganda campaign to recruit women. It was centred on a figure known as Rosie the Riveter.² The latter was a tough woman factory labourer performing what was previously considered men's work; yet she was feminine. The campaign aimed at encouraging women to undertake certain male jobs and, at the same time, to reassure both men and society that the demands of war would not transform women into unladylike creatures. As a result, more

¹ Olsen, Marie R, *Finding Our Way: Freidan, Steinem, and the Fight for the Women's Movement (1960-1980)*, Front Royal, Virginia, 2017, p. 16.

² *Rosie the Riveter* became the subject and title of a song and a Hollywood movie during W.W. II. It is still used as a symbol of American feminism and women's economic power. Duncan, Raymond & Webster, Barbara J, *World Politics in the Twenty First Century*, Houghton Mifflin College, Boston, 2010, p. 268.

than seven million women joined the workforce, and the female labour force increased by 32 % from 1941 to 1945.¹

Thanks to Rosie the Riveter campaign, riveting became one of the jobs that women learned and mastered during WW II. In addition to that, some women began to drive trucks; others entered the metal, steel, shipbuilding and automobile industries. Banking, too, saw feminization in its employment ranks, and the number of female workers increased from sixty-five thousand to, approximately, one hundred thirty thousand; constituting nearly one half of the total personnel.² The Second World War, really, provided unprecedented opportunities for American women to enter into jobs that had never been open to them before.

Though women were crucial to the war effort, and though their help was extremely needed, female workers continued to suffer from sex discrimination. For example, their pay lagged far behind their male counterparts' even though they, sometimes, did the same work.³ By 1944, skilled female workers earned an average weekly wage of 31.21\$ while their male counterparts, in similar positions, earned 54.65\$ weekly.⁴ Women, quickly, understood that even though they succeeded to cross boundaries into the masculinised workplaces, and even though they faced the same workplace challenges and hazards, they would never be able to make profit of the same advantages given to their male co-workers.

Step by step, and by the end of the war, the American government started to insinuate that the new reorganization of gender roles, and the acceptance of women into non-traditional roles were temporary and limited to the duration of the war. American leaders, in fact, started to fear the appearance of social ills and discomforts that would, later on, affect society and family in a bad way because of absent mothers. In this sense, social commentators admonished women to either return to their "rightful place" in the home

¹ Hartmann, Susan M, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940's*, Twayne, Boston, 1982, p.159.

² McEuen, Melissa A, *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on The American Home Front (1941-1945)*, University of Georgia Press, Athens and London, 2011, pp. 59-61.

³ Schweitzer, Mary M, "World war II and female labor force participation rates", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol 40, N 1, 1980, pp. 89-95.

⁴ Hartmann, Susan M, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

immediately after the end of the war and to assume full responsibility towards their families, or to resume their traditional low-status, poorly-paid, sex-segregated pre-war jobs.

Although a lot of American women accepted the renewal of domesticity, immediately after the end of World War Two, and enjoyed their new living conditions in such beautiful and spacious suburban homes,¹ many wanted to remain in the work force because they feared to lose their social and economic independence. However, they suffered a lot because the American society continued to favour men and to give them the most prestigious jobs, whereas, women were accepted to work only in one of the ten top female occupations. These were secretary, sales woman in retail trade, private household worker, elementary school teacher, bookkeeper, waitress, professional nurse, sewer or stitcher in manufacturing, typist, and cashier.² Moreover, women were constantly blocked from being promoted within their firms and institutions. This discrimination against women in the workforce laid the foundation for a later feminist movement that characterized sixties' America.

Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is widely credited for having begun second wave feminism in the United States of America from the 1960's until the 1980's to seek more power and more opportunities for women, and to call for a new social order that would shift public leadership and occupational dominance from men primarily to women and men equally.³

The second feminist movement, just like the first one, was a powerful and ever-changing force in American life, generating new ideas and new organizations asking for new issues. So, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, Elizabeth Boyer, and many other feminists of

¹ Spacious houses with comfortable kitchens, equipped with modern household appliances, were built in order to encourage women to leave their war time jobs. The American Vice President Richard Nixon proclaimed in 1959: "the 'model' home with a male breadwinner and a full-time female homemaker, adorned with a wide array of consumer goods represented the essence of American freedom". Tyler, Elaine M, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Basic Book Inc, New York, 1988, p. 11

² Yates, Gayle G, *What Women Want: The Ideas of the Movement*, Harvard University Press, USA, 1975, p. 58.

³ Howard, Brick, *The Age of Contradictions: American Thought and Culture in the 1960's*, Cornell University Press, New York, 2000, p. 51.

the sixties and seventies, did their best to oppose the renewed ideology of domesticity, and to ask for more equality between the sexes throughout the establishment of a series of female organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), 1966, the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), 1968, and the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), 1971.

Other feminists simply chose music as a means to express women's grievances and hatred vis-à-vis men. In this respect, a number of Women's Music Festivals were held during the seventies to make more pressure on both the government and society in order to take the woman's cause into consideration, and to give women more opportunities to develop their potential. For instance, I am Woman, by Helen Reddy, became a popular protest song that seventies American women used to sing when they organized feminist meetings to ask for equal rights.

Thanks to the enormous efforts made by feminist leaders, mainly Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem who remained in the forefront of the movement, a lot of goals were met. Therefore, a great number of oppressive laws based on sex were repealed, and more women were accepted in positions of leadership in higher education, business, politics, religion and sports. Some successful female names might be mentioned such as Shirley Hufstедler who became the first woman to serve as Secretary of Education, in 1979, and Leah Lowenstein was the first woman dean of an American co-educational medical school in 1982. Politically speaking, Ella Tambussi Grasso was the first woman to be elected governor of an American state, Connecticut, without having been the spouse or widow of a former governor. From a religious point of view, Rachel Henderlite was the first woman to be ordained a pastor of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Women could, also, join boys' clubs such as the United States armed forces, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In addition to that, a range of feminist businesses, established by women, flourished during the seventies, eighties, and nineties including women's bookstores, feminist credit unions, feminist presses, feminist mail-order catalogs, and feminist restaurants.

5. The Persistence of Gender Inequality in Today's America

It is true that the leaders of the two feminist waves brought important changes to the American society where women started to enjoy more rights. However, women have recently noticed that gender inequality still exists, and that men continue to consider themselves as superior creatures.

5.1 Sex Discrimination in the Workplace

As mentioned earlier, even though the women's movement improved the status of women, it has not succeeded to stop gender inequality in the workplace. In this respect and according to a recent analysis made by Pew Research Center, about 42% female employees in the United States have experienced sex discrimination in the workplace. Women workers, for example, have remarked that the majority of their male colleagues still cling to that idea based on women's incompetence when performing certain tasks. As a result, very often, women experience repeated small slights at work and their wages are, most of the time, lower than those of their male counterparts because of their gender. 15% of American working women claim that they have received less support from their senior leaders, and that the latter ignore them when they ask for any promotion or advancement at work compared to only 7% of working men who have experienced the same situation.¹

According to the same analysis, about 54% of women say they have experienced different forms of sexual harassment in their workplace. As a result, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the U.S.A received 12.025 complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace in 2006.² Women workers are very often victims of such prominent men as Hollywood celebrities or political leaders. For example, the 2017 bombshell report, published by the New York Times, revealed that several dozen women had experienced sexual harassment from the film producer Harvey Weinstein. The victims varied from famous actresses like Ashley Judd and Gwyneth Paltrow to ordinary women working at the Weinstein Company.

Prominent and very powerful political leaders have, also, been accused of sexual misconduct vis-à-vis well-known women. Among these, the former American president Donald Trump who was accused, by over twenty women, of sexual misconduct, including assault, since the 1970's.³

5.2 Gender Inequality in Political Participation

¹ Hall, Katy, Paid Parental Leave: U.S. vs. The World, Huffington Post, New York, 2013, p. 20.

² Ibid.

³ Relman, Eliza, "The Twenty six women who have accused Trump of sexual misconduct", <https://www.businessinsider.com> (retrieved on 17 September, 2020).

In a democratic nation where freedom and equality are respected, the citizens are supposed to be allowed to take part in political activities – such as voting or being members of political parties or running for public office – and “attempt to influence the structure of government, the selection of government authorities, or the policies of government”.¹ Unfortunately, it is not the case in the United States of America because most elected offices are disproportionately held by white males.²

While many European countries have made a rapid progress vis-à-vis women’s participation in politics, the United States has failed and its rank has sunk from 41 in the world in 1997 to 101 in 2017.³ Existing research shows that the United States witnessed more female participation, during the 1990’s, in some political activities like signing petitions, attending city council meetings, and writing to state legislators, but it also indicates that women are much less likely than men to hold elected offices. For instance, in 2018 women held 19.8 percent of 535 seats in the U.S Congress.⁴ At the state and local levels, they held only six governorships, about one-quarter of state legislative seats, and one-fifth of mayoral positions in the hundred largest U.S. cities.⁵

On the basis of a deep analysis of the American political system, the author Saskia Brechenmacher explains that American women receive very little encouragement to participate in politics or to run for office. She reveals that female candidates’ recruitment has never been a priority for the American political parties, and that the latter have constantly hindered women’s political advancement.⁶

¹ Conway, M. Margaret, “Women and political participation”, *Political Science and Politics*, Vol 34, N 2, 2001, pp. 231–233.

² Ibid.

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Women in national parliaments: statistical archive”, <https://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm> (retrieved in 2017)

⁴ Center for American Women in Politics, “Women in the U.S. congress”, <https://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-elective-office> (retrieved in 2018)

⁵ Brechenmacher, Saskia, “Tackling women’s underrepresentation in US politics”, <https://www.carnegieendowment.org> (retrieved on 2018)

⁶ Ibid.

This limited female participation in American politics is mainly due to the persistence of entrenched barriers to equal representation, particularly at leadership levels¹. It is also because women continue to bear more household and caregiving burden than men; leaving them with insufficient experience and time to assume very important political roles such as running for presidency.² The most difficult obstacle that makes it difficult for American women to balance a political career with the demand of family life is the lack of provisions for childcare and parental leave. Unlike Western European democracies, the United States still has no federal law requiring employers to offer paid maternity and parental leave to employees. Such a law would make it easier for women to make the jump into a political career.³

6.Conclusion

This paper has tried to explain how American women organized themselves during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, through the establishment of numerous female organizations, to defy those traditional barriers imposed on them in different spheres of life, and to express their wish to be treated as full citizens of the United States enjoying such inalienable rights as the right to equal access to education, the right to enter the public sphere and the right to vote.

Despite the great strides American women have made thanks to their movement, they continue to face “gender-specific hurdles”, harassment and backlash at work, and they remain underrepresented in political leadership positions. For this reason, women in the United States are still trying to grapple with institutional procedures, norms, and practices that, in most cases, do not reflect their needs and interests,⁴ and the best proof of the continuity of women’s struggle against men’s supremacy is the Women’s March on Washington D.C, 2017, where hundreds of thousands of people took part to ask for more protection for women.

¹ Ibid.

² Welch, Susan, (1977). “Women as political animals? A test of some explanations for male-female political participation differences”, *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol 21, N 4, 1977, pp. 711-730.

³ Brechenmacher, Saskia, op., cit.

⁴ Lovenduski, Joni, *Feminizing Politics*, MA Polity Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 48.

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