

The Women's Suffrage Campaign

Imagine you are a woman living in 1919. For years, you have been faithfully serving your husband, taking care of your children and fulfilling your domestic duties. One day, you glance at the front page of a local newspaper, taking in the long overdue headline: "Nineteenth Amendment Passed: Women Allowed to Vote." Your heart leaps; it has been your secret ambition for years to be on equal footing with men. You will finally be permitted to have a say in your nation's government. It is thrilling to witness such an important event in the women's rights movement; finally, your troubles will be over. Or will they?

Though it seems to you that the new amendment can only mean good things, your husband has a different perspective. He tells you he wishes you would not vote in the coming election. You are outraged. How can he not realize the significance of this event? Why would he not want you to vote? Your husband tells you he believes that there will be men who oppose women's suffrage; he believes it will be dangerous for you to enter the polls. You scoff at him, telling him you can handle yourself, but quietly, you wonder if he has a point. What if you get beat up for attempting to vote? Slowly, you begin to question your decision to vote at all. You have no experience, no political knowledge, no idea who you should even vote for. Maybe your husband is right; maybe you should leave the voting to the men. After all, they have been doing it for years. Why fix something if it isn't broken?

Later that day, as you hang the laundry on the clothesline outside, you chat with your neighbor about the controversial topic. You are shocked to hear that she doesn't even want to vote, that she wished the amendment had never been passed in the first place. Your neighbor tells you that her husband told her that, on no terms, was she to bring shame to the family by stepping into a world where she had no business exploring. You realize that your own husband probably

feels just like this - he is probably just trying to be nice. You wonder why men feel so threatened by women's suffrage. Is it possible that the nineteenth amendment could have unforeseen negative effects?

The truth is, very few people living in 1919 stopped to consider the other gender's point of view. Most women were excited to be given a say in government; think of it as a similar feeling to the colonists who, after breaking away from Britain, created their own representative government, which gave power to the people. On the other hand, most men felt that women were venturing into a realm where they didn't belong. In their opinion, women had no idea how to run a country; how were they to become educated voters? These differences of opinion led to splits in society in which women wanting to participate in government were socially outcast.

Of course, the nineteenth amendment was a huge step forward in women's rights, the downside of this being that many sexist men opposed rights for women. In fact, when Susan B. Anthony and other suffragist leaders gave speeches and spoke at rallies, they faced mobs of sexist men who aimed to prevent them from voting. This was during a time when women enjoyed few rights; they were expected to submit entirely to their husbands. At the thought of their wives voting, they were afraid. After all, if women were given a say in their country, wouldn't they expect to have a say in their marriage and in their household? Sure, the nineteenth amendment was a huge step forward for women's rights, but at this time, many men didn't support women's rights. And those that supported women's rights wouldn't have wanted to put their wives in harm's way by allowing them to journey to the polls, requiring that they interact with many against the amendment.

Later that day, you make the perilous journey to the polls with several of your fellow women who wish to voice their opinions regarding the laws of their country. You are cursed and

screamed at, bombarded with a barrage of tomatoes and cabbages, and barred from entering the voting offices. However, with persistence and determination, you cast your vote, along with many other women, feeling a sense of pride, equality, and patriotism. Above all, you feel a sense of hope. Hope for the future of your country. Hope for the progression of the women's rights movement. Hope for the success of the amendment and for the evolving opinions about humanity.

Submitted by:

Patrick O'Leary
15315 Stonebridge Parkway, San Diego, CA 92131
858-397-1290
St. Gregory the Great Catholic School
Eighth Grade

Bibliography

1. Gertner, Nancy, and Gail Heriot. "The 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution." National Constitution Center – [Constitutioncenter.org](https://www.constitutioncenter.org), National Constitution Center, [constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendments/amendment-xix](https://www.constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendments/amendment-xix).