



**Remarks at the Press Conference of “Women’s Rights Pioneers” Monument Dedication
Central Park - New York, NY
August 26, 2020
Transcript**

HILLARY CLINTON: Wow, a very, very special thanks to all of you, particularly, to Pam Elam. Thank you, Pam, and to the Board of Monumental Women, for not only developing the idea of this statue, but persevering, fundraising, advocating, and then finally seeing that dream come true. Thank you for commissioning Meredith Bergmann to sculpt it. Meredith, congratulations on your work and on breaking the bronze ceiling in Central Park, with the Women’s Rights Pioneers statue. Thank you, Heather, so much, Heather Nesle and to the New York Life Insurance Company for your strong support of the endeavor. I love the idea that Susan B. Anthony’s father and brother and her entire family was involved with New York Life Insurance Company way back when. And thanks to the thousands of donors, including the Girl Scouts, [cheering] -- I was a Girl Scout and I loved hearing about your commitment to this, who chipped in with matching funds.

I want to thank all of the officials, appointed and elected, who are here both in-person and virtually, and in particular, Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul, and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney who carries on the battle for the Equal Rights Amendment and is also leading the charge to save our Post Office, so thank you very, very much. To my longtime friend, Borough President Gayle Brewer--if you want something done that’s hard, ask Gayle to do it, because she will totally persevere, and to City Council Member Helen Rosenthal—all of you took to heart Susan B. Anthony’s famous decree that “Failure is impossible!”

I’m also really pleased that we could gather today for this event because with all that’s going on that wasn’t guaranteed, but it seems especially appropriate that today on Women’s Equality Day, we are unveiling a new statue in Central Park for the first time in over six decades. The first statue of real, non-fictional women...the first statue of an African-American...and significantly, a statue that depicts three great Americans working together.

[Applause].

As you know, 100 years ago last week, Tennessee became the last state needed to ratify the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. That was the culmination of a decades long struggle, and most of the women who first took up this fight, never lived to see the promised land. Many of these women were New Yorkers. Like Sojourner Truth, who told the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851: "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back and get it right side up again!"

Like Susan B. Anthony, whose arrest—which she was very proud of, for the crime of “voting while female” in 1872 was covered in *The New York Times* the next day under the heading “minor topics.”

[Laughter].

And like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who never forgot that she and her fellow suffragists were fighting not for themselves alone, but for the generations that would follow.

These three women worked side-by-side, not only on suffrage, but on abolition. All three wanted universal suffrage for all Americans, and none were too happy when men of color got the vote without women. They had passionate disagreements. Sojourner Truth spoke out against the racism she experienced as a Black woman—including, too often, at the hands of white suffragists.

Because while the passage of the 19th Amendment was a critical, important, historic victory, it was also an incomplete one. It would take decades longer to guarantee the franchise for women of color, especially Black and Native American women. A century later, the struggle to enforce the right to vote continues. We're still fighting so that every eligible American can cast their ballot, and know their vote will be counted, regardless of race, age, or geography. As Sojourner, Susan, and Elizabeth understood, we are all freer when every one of us is free. Our democracy belongs to all of us.

Now heading into 2020, there were plans to celebrate the centennial with public events, exhibitions, and marches to the polls. Well, the pandemic changed all that. Events were cancelled, exhibitions pulled down, and millions of Americans worried that these unprecedented circumstances might hurt the hopes we all have for the future of our country, including the hope that they would be able to vote safely.

But the current circumstances aren't as unprecedented as some might think. Remember in the fall of 1918, during the suffragists' final push for the vote, the influenza pandemic was

sweeping the nation. Thousands died here in the U.S., and hope of passing the amendment started to fade, but the suffragists persisted. They postponed events, wore masks, and held socially distanced gatherings. But they also marched and persisted. Many women—including women of color—risked their lives to serve as nurses on the front lines against the epidemic and in the World War that was also going on. Between the tireless organizing and the brave contributions of women to their country, the tide of public opinion began to turn and less than a year later, women won the right to vote.

So, our charge now, as we stand in the great river of history, is to take the stories of the women in this stature and carry them forward into our schools, into the media, onto social media, and into our lives.

I hope everyone will promote not only the statue, but the Monumental Women's undertaking in ensuring that this is the first of many statues of pioneering women. There's nothing more important, however, to honor the women portrayed in this statue, than to vote. That is the best way to lead America, as the suffragists used to say, "forward through the darkness, forward into light." Thank you for making sure we are reminded of that here in Central Park.

[Applause].