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Central Park Gets its First Statue of Real, Nonfictional Women After Seven Year Effort by All-Volunteer Nonprofit Monumental Women

On the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Ratification and Certification of the 19th Amendment, Monumental Women Unveils Statue of Suffragists Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Created by Nationally Renowned Sculptor Meredith Bergmann

Group Also Issues Challenge to Municipalities to Rectify Lack of Representation of Diverse Women in U.S. Public Spaces

New York, NY – August 26, 2020 – Today, the 100th anniversary of the ratification and certification of the 19th “Votes for Women” Amendment, the all-volunteer nonprofit Monumental Women held a ceremony to unveil the *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument* in Central Park, featuring suffragists and New Yorkers Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. It is the first statue depicting real, nonfictional women in the park’s 167-year history, which has 23 statues depicting historical men.

The statue was conceived, created, and funded by the nonprofit Monumental Women, made up of women's rights advocates, historians and community leaders. The group began working to develop the statue and secure a prominent location on Central Park’s famed Literary Walk in 2014. The organization also raised \$1.5 million in private funding to pay for the statue, including a \$500,000 challenge grant from New York Life and donations from Girl Scouts troops of proceeds from cookie sales. It was designed and sculpted by nationally recognized sculptor Meredith Bergmann, whose work focuses on advancing social justice through art.

The unveiling ceremony featured in-person and pre-recorded remarks due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. Speakers included Monumental Women's President Pam Elam; NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver; Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer; remarks from descendants of Suffragists; women's rights leaders; historians; youth activists; excerpts of actors Meryl Streep, Viola Davis, Jane Alexander, Rita Moreno, Zoe Saldana, America Ferrara voicing Anthony, Stanton and Truth; actors Lily Tomlin and Sophia Bush; filmmaker Ken Burns; U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand; Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul; Ford Foundation President Darren Walker and others.

The ceremony was broadcast live and is available to view on Monumental Women's [website](#), [YouTube](#) and [Facebook page](#).

The organization also issued a challenge to municipalities across the United States to build more monuments and statues honoring diverse women and offered to share its experience to help other groups looking to do similar work. Nationwide there are more than 5,000 outdoor statues of people, but estimates show that fewer than 400 of them are women.

"We've been fighting to break the bronze ceiling in Central Park for over seven long years, and we celebrate achieving that goal today," said **Pam Elam, president of Monumental Women**. "It's fitting that the first statue of real women in the park depicts women working together to fight for equality and justice, as women will continue to do until the battle is won. We are now calling on other municipalities to join us in creating monuments that honor the many diverse women who helped make those cities great."

Meredith Bergmann, sculptor of the Women's Rights Pioneers Monument, said: "My challenge in creating this monument was to celebrate the lives and achievements of these three inspiring women while showing that their work, which is now our work, is unfinished and ongoing— so I portrayed them in the middle of a discussion. I hope the monument will challenge viewers to study the history of the struggle for women's rights and to continue that struggle. Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton did not live to see the enactment of the 19th Amendment, and even 100 years later there is so much left for us to do to win equality and justice for all."

The statue has the support of local community boards, community and government leaders, including Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, who has been a leading advocate for the

approval of the statue, and countless other individuals, foundations and organizations in New York City and across the country.

Manhattan Borough President Gale A Brewer said: "Today is the beginning of a new era for Central Park: we finally break the Bronze Ceiling by honoring Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth and the thousands of monumental women who risked their lives for suffrage. Our history is filled with monumental women and people of color who all knew that voting was only a right worth fighting for if we exercise it. In November, during what will be a monumental election, we must be sure to vote. We have seen in these past few months that change can begin in the streets. But to be effective it must lead to the voting booth."

"As the first sculpture in Central Park depicting real women, the statue of Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Sojourner Truth highlights the importance of equity – in our parks and beyond," said **NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP**. "We are thrilled to welcome this monumental tribute to brave and dynamic women who fought for their equal rights and inspired others to follow in their footsteps."

"As someone who has dedicated much of my life to breaking sexist barriers and clearing a path for other women to live as full and equal members of society, I'm thrilled that we've finally broken through one more barrier," said **Brenda Berkman, Captain, New York City Fire Department (retired), and Monumental Women board member**. "This Monument is so much more than a statue: it's a statement that our public spaces must reflect the idea that women finally get the credit and opportunities that they are due."

"We can't depend solely on law and policy to correct inequality; we must also affirm the strength of women," said **Namita Luthra, civil rights lawyer and Monumental Women board member**. "Our hope is that this monument lights a spark in those who see it and gives them courage to challenge the status quo and the people, policies and societal norms that still hold women back."

Richard Southwick, FAIA, Partner & Director of Historic Preservation at Beyer Blinder Belle said: Beyer Blinder Belle is honored to have assisted Monumental Women in organizing the national competition, coordinating the installation of the Women's Rights Pioneers

Monument, and “breaking the bronze ceiling” in Central Park. We’re excited to see Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton each larger than life, and shown working together in the struggle for Equal Rights. Congratulations to Monumental Women, Meredith Bergmann, and the City of New York on this groundbreaking achievement.

The voices of actors Meryl Streep, Viola Davis, Jane Alexander, Rita Moreno, Zoe Saldana, America Ferrara voicing Anthony, Stanton and Truth, were recorded for the “Talking Statues” app which Monumental Women also unveiled today. The app includes a script by Joanne Parrent telling the stories behind the women in the *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument* through short dialogues, as well as documentaries and an interview with sculptor Meredith Bergmann. Part of Monumental Women’s campaign to educate Park visitors about women’s history, the Talking Statues project was started by David Peter Fox, who served as a consultant. The public can easily access the app content by scanning a QR code or downloading the Talking Statues app.