

Woman's rights



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In the 1600's, when the women's holocaust was in full effect, women were stripped of their basic rights. Their decisions were made by their husbands. Legally women were men's property, could not vote, hold office, enter a professional occupation, attend college or gain custody of their children after a divorce (The Women are Angry). Skip forward about 400 years later and now women have gained many more rights and independence. Women can now vote, hold office, have reproductive rights and attend college. In 1981, Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed a Supreme Court Justice.

Hillary Clinton, wife of our 42nd President, Bill Clinton, has served as a senator and today she is Secretary of State. Unfortunately, women still fight for equal representation and pay in all fields, from government to science, math, and other professional careers. Women's rights have overcome a lot of challenges but there's more progress to be made. In the 1600's, a woman's role was to be a good Christian and live to serve your husband (Murkham). In the male-dominated world, a woman was to be a good housewife and take care of the kids. Let our English housewife be a godly, constant and religious woman, learning from the worthy Preacher and her Husband. " In this short excerpt titled, " Countrey Contentments", says the english woman should look up to the man and her religion (Murkham). Another example of a woman's role in the 1600's is from the Scarlet Letter. In the movie, women get disciplined for riding a horse, having too many laces on her dress and get prosecuted for talking about the Bible without a male presence (Joffe). Also women were not allowed to live alone and widows were not allowed to remarry until seven years had passed.

Then men took it a step further into witchcraft. During a span of 300 years, an estimated 300, 000 people died (Amend). In another movie, The Burning Times, women were accused of witchcraft for dancing and if they gathered at night it was considered evil so they were accused. In a document detailing two trials, two women were accused of witchcraft. Their names were Susannah Martin and Mary Lacy. Mrs. Martin denied and Mrs Lacey "admitted". Martin was hung and Lacey lived. Most women would survive if they admitted to witchcraft because they would be bowing down to the men.

If they denied, the men wouldn't like this because they would be challenging their authority. This was a political statement from the men; to show who's in power and keep the women in their place. This quick excerpt from page 47 entails Mrs. Lacey admitting of riding a pole: " Magistrate: Did you at anytime ride upon a stick or pole? Lacey: Yes. Magistrate: How High? Lacey: Sometimes above the trees. " Some neighbors accused other neighbors out of jealousy or a way to deflect their hardships. As you can see, the way women were treated in the 1600 was absurd. The Salem Witch trials brought witchcraft to a whole new level.

In the small town of Salem, Massachusetts is where the events took place. In these paragraphs, historian Eric Foner entails the happenings of Salem. " Until 1692, the prosecution of witches had been local and sporadic. But in the heightened anxiety of that year, a series of trials and executions took place in the town of Salem that made its name to this day a byword for fanaticism and persecution. (Foner 106)" " By the middle of 1692, hundreds of residents of Salem had come forward to accuse their neighbors. Some, it appears, used the occasion to settle old scores within the Salem community.

Local authorities took legal action against nearly 150 persons, the large majority of them women. Many confessed to save their lives, but fourteen women and five men were hanged, protesting their innocence until the very end. One man was pressed to death (crushed under the weight of stone) for refusing to enter a plea. As accusations and executions multiplied, it became clear that something was seriously wrong with the colony's court system. Toward the end of 1692, the Governor of Massachusetts dissolved the Salem court and ordered the remaining prisoners released. The Salem Witch trials got to be outrageous. It was finally realized that there wasn't any actual witchcraft. It was just a fight for survival. The Salem Witchcraft Trial was the start of the end to witchcraft. Now that brings us to a Women's role in modern times. There is a much different treatment and feeling from men toward women. Women now are much more independent and free. They're entitled to much more rights; like the right to vote, sue for divorce, custody of their children, and to retain control of their own property.

Here are some of the most recent rights gained for women: greater freedom in reproductive choice (1973), minimum wage protection for domestic workers (1974), prohibitions against discrimination in employment against pregnant women (1978), tougher child support laws and protection of pension rights for widows and divorced women (1984), provision of federal funds for child care (1990), employment protection for workers needing extended time off to care for family members (1993), and protections against violence (1994).

As you can see these are some important rights gained for women. But there is still progress to be made. " In 2005, women over the age of 16 comprise

59 percent of the workforce, yet, on average, they earned only 77 cents for every \$1 their male counterparts earned. That's just one of the many modern rights struggles. " Another challenge facing working women is how to balance the demands of home and family with that of the workplace. Many women with children and jobs face the conundrum of neglecting one or the other.

Some high-achieving women find themselves foregoing families. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, economist and author of several books about professional women, found that 42 percent of corporate women are childless by age 40, but only 14 percent planned to be. Women's rights have made a lot of progress but there is still more to be made. When one could compare the 1600's to the modern times, a woman's role in society is completely different. The change is immense.

Women are educated, independent and free compared to the 1600-female; her job was to serve her husband. But there has been a small continuity part. Women are sometimes stereotyped to be child-bearers, cooks and housewives by men just as their jobs were in the 1600's. Besides that some women have more power than men. Some women are CEO's, senators and one even ran for President. Although women face more challenges along the way, many have been extremely successful. Women's rights have overcome a lot of challenges but there's more progress to be made.