

### **Your Vote is Our Future:**

On July nineteenth, 1848, almost three hundred women gathered in Seneca Falls New York to attend the first ever U.S. women's rights convention. Of the three hundred present, sixty-eight would sign the Declaration of Sentiments, proclaiming their "right to be free as man is free", but only one would ever live to cast a vote. Charlotte Woodward was a teenager when she attended the convention, but she was ninety-one before she ever saw a ballot. Susan B Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and so many other powerful suffragists died before their cause ever saw fruition but their lives and righteous struggle have changed America for the better, and have personally taught me the power that one woman holds, when she uses her voice.

Throughout their struggle for equality suffragists all over the world faced mockery and indignities unimaginable to me in my modern America, but despite all opposition they never stopped moving forward and that progress can not end with this generation. We have a responsibility to exercise the rights so many have been denied to better our nation. This is a government for the people and by the people, and it is us the people that have the power to shape its future, for better or for worse. That power propagates a duty to be diligent in the same way the suffragists were diligent to their cause.

Harriet Stanton Blatch was a second wave suffragist whom I respect greatly. Blatch built on her mother's efforts and beliefs as a founding suffragist and in 1907 she formed the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women which altered the course of the movement itself. Blatch famously hypothesized, "Perhaps someday men will raise a tablet reading in letters of gold: 'All honor to women, the first disenfranchised class in history who, unaided by any political party, won enfranchisement by its own effort ... and achieved the victory without the shedding of a drop of human blood. All honor to women of the world!'. Perhaps there has been no golden tablet, but when I vote, when we the women of America vote, we bring honor not only to ourselves but to the women who fought against impossible odds to give us this right. These women have passed on, but they made their mark, and now it is time for us to make ours. We must vote for the future of America, thankful that past America fought to give us the vote. May we never forget the message Sojourner Truth, Alice Paul and so many others spent their lives teaching us, "your vote is our future".