

## 25 ESSENTIAL THOUGHTS ABOUT WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

**"If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or representation." *First Lady Abigail Adams*, wife of the second U.S. President John Adams**

**"If a woman earned a dollar by scrubbing, her husband had a right to take the dollar and go and get drunk with it and beat her afterwards. It was his dollar." Lucy Stone, early abolitionist and women's rights advocate.**

**"We would have every arbitrary barrier thrown down. We would have every path laid open to women as freely as to men. If you ask me what offices they may fill, I reply—any. . . Let them be sea captains, if you will." Margaret Fuller, author of America's first major feminist book.**

**"The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. . . He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice. He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men . . . She is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement. . . Moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man. . . He has endeavored. . . to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life." *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 1848, slavery abolitionist and women's rights advocate.**

**"It was we, the people, not we, the white male citizens. . . but we, the whole people, who formed the union. . . . No man is**

**good enough to govern any woman without her consent. . . I think the girl who is able to earn her own living and pay her own way should be as happy as anybody on earth. The sense of independence and security is very sweet." *Susan B. Anthony*, leader in the campaign for women's right to vote.**

**"There can be no question that women should have equal rights with men." . . . "Women should have free access to every field of labor which they care to enter, and when their work is as valuable as that of a man it should be paid as highly. . . . As regards the laws relating to marriage there should be the most absolute equality between the two sexes. I do not think the woman should assume the man's name." *Theodore Roosevelt***

**Where Theodore Roosevelt saw ideals, his cousin –in-law saw limits: "Too often the great decisions are originated and given form in bodies made up wholly of men, or so completely dominated by them that whatever of special value women have to offer is shunted aside without expression." *Eleanor Roosevelt***

**"A girl should not expect special privileges because of her sex but neither should she adjust to prejudice and discrimination. . . . Men are not the enemy, but the fellow victims." *Betty Friedan***

**"What is sad for women of my generation is that they weren't supposed to work if they had families. What were they going to do when the children are grown - watch the raindrops coming down the window pane?" *Jacqueline Kennedy***

**"A lot of so-called conservatives think I've turned liberal because I believe a woman has a right to an abortion. That's a decision that's up to a pregnant woman, not up to the pope or some do-gooders on the religious right." *Barry Goldwater***

**Barry Goldwater's wife Peggy was co-founder of Arizona Planned Parenthood in 1937. "We knew family planning could relieve a great deal of human suffering," she wrote. "Still . . . even among intelligent people, the subject was considered too intimate to be discussed or dealt with openly." Today their granddaughter is a clinic volunteer and Planned Parenthood board member. In 1964 *Harry S. Truman and Dwight D.***

**Eisenhower served together as bipartisan honorary co-chairs of Planned Parenthood. In stark contrast to presidential hopeful Mitt Romney's declaration in March of 2012, "Planned Parenthood, we're going to get rid of that."**

**"In this Land of the Free, it is right, and by nature it ought to be, that all men and all women are equal before the law."  
*Gerald R. Ford***

**"The search for human freedom can never be complete without freedom for women. . . . Any woman should have the right to a safe and legal abortion."  
*First Lady Betty Ford***

**'To label family planning and legal abortion programs "genocide" is male rhetoric, for male ears. . . Women know, and so do many men, that two or three children who are wanted, prepared for, reared amid love and stability, and educated to the limit of their ability will mean more for the future of the black and brown races from which they come than any number of neglected, hungry, ill-housed and ill-clothed youngsters. Pride in one's race, as well as simple humanity, supports this view."  
*Black Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm***

**"No one knows what leadership has gone undiscovered in women of all races, and in black and other minority men. . . . If women are supposed to be less rational and more emotional at the beginning of our menstrual cycle when the female hormone is at its lowest level, then why isn't it logical to say that, in those few days, women behave the most like the way men behave all month long?"  
*Gloria Steinem, founder of Ms. Magazine***

**"I hate what the fundamentalist fanatics are doing to our country. . . I have a strong belief that you are in charge of your body, whether male or female. It's the house you are living in for your entire existence – your temple, as the more religious might say."  
*Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura***

**Being pro-choice is trusting the individual to make the right decision for herself and her family, and not entrusting that decision to anyone wearing the authority of government in any regard."  
*Hillary Clinton***

**"I remember those days, when people would go to Mexico to get back-alley abortions. . . I hope every woman in this country, whether. . . they themselves would make one decision or another, will come together and say, "Pro-choice means that the Government respects the individual, and isn't that really what our country is all about?" *Senator Barbara Boxer***

**"The overreach of the far right isn't just now entering our pants—it's always been there. . . . After a year of coordinated assaults on Planned Parenthood, "personhood" initiatives that stood to make oral contraceptives illegal, and other attacks on protected sex, we have come to a bizarre moment. . . Welcome to the new war on contraception. The Catholic Church's fight to forbid insurance-provided birth control to employees of religious organizations—and the all-male panel on a House Oversight Committee hearing on contraception—has officially codified this war. But . . . a few questions stand out; namely, how is it in a country where 99 percent of women have used birth control that we are fighting over whether people should have access to contraceptives? How did a position this extreme and alienated from the will of the people enter the mainstream political conversation?" *Writer Sady Doyle*. Doyle continues, "Author Christina Page says that she's been recommending since 2008 that reporters ask all GOP candidates about their position on contraception. 'The media wasn't willing.'"**

***Stephen Colbert:* "They are holding hearings in Washington right now about women's reproduction. It's five guys up there. . . . Why are women so obsessed with controlling their own bodies, anyway?"**

***Congressional Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi,* replying: "It's a women's health issue which is very important to every family. The family's health, a mother's health, and the health of her children. It isn't up to five guys sitting around a table in Washington, D.C. to tell women what to do. It would be wise for the gentlemen to understand."**

***The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice* is a nationwide alliance of more than forty mainstream Protestant, Jewish, and other religious groups which hold that "Every woman must have the right to consider all options when she faces a problem pregnancy and the freedom to allow her to come to a decision**

**that is in harmony with her own moral and religious values-- without government intrusion.. . . At the very heart of the abortion debate are conflicting religious views about when "personhood" begins -- a dispute that has engaged theologians for centuries. . . Any law passed to restrict abortion would impose a religious view held by some citizens, and in effect, prevent all other citizens from freely practicing their own religions. . . . The abortion debate in America is not a conflict between the 'God-fearing' and the 'Godless' but is instead a struggle between those determined to undermine religious freedom and those determined to preserve it."**

**"Until the mid-1970s, only Roman Catholic organizations had any coordinated opposition to abortion. In fact, before 1980 the Southern Baptist Convention officially advocated loosening abortion restrictions. Ironically, however, more recently many Evangelical Christians who dislike the Catholic Church swallowed recent Vatican doctrine lock, stock, and barrel. Apparently they did not read or respect what Washington, Madison, Jefferson, Paine, and Allen said and wrote, and set out to impose their own beliefs on us all. For the record, Jesus Christ was silent on both contraception and abortion, taking no position about either Jesus did not advocate the slightest bit of the Papal or extremist Evangelical agenda toward women. He was a friend and defender of women in his own time. He strongly opposed every attitude and every action that would lead toward unnecessary suffering. By contrast, the present right wing agenda leads directly to substantial needless suffering that could be avoided." *The Radical Wrong***

**"A woman's ability to decide how many children to have, and when, without interference from the government, is one of the most fundamental rights we possess. It is not just an issue of choice, but equality and opportunity for all women." *Barack Obama***

**WOMEN OF AMERICA, UNITE! Any law, rule, or custom that limits women's rights or freedoms but not men's is exploitive, unacceptable gender discrimination. We will not vote for, and will actively work against, any candidate who supports such a law, rule, or custom. We will withhold all financial support from any political party or religious organization that supports such discrimination. We will consider permanently leaving any such**

party or other organization to join with sisters and brothers who actively oppose such restrictions. In whatever ways we find appropriate (which may go so far as to include days of fasting and prayer during which no work may be performed and no items will be bought) we will actively demonstrate commitment to full rights of all women to live their lives and control their bodies as they choose, free from gender-related discrimination, domination, or oppression of any kind. We invite all men who support women's self-determination to join us."  
*The American Women's Freedom Movement Declaration*

*The Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex," first introduced in the Senate in 1923, has been introduced again and again, but never passed in a majority of (male dominated) state legislatures. At this writing twenty-one states have some version of it in their state constitutions.*