

## Women's History Month | March 2022

March is Women's History Month. This month, we pay tribute to the generations of trailblazing women who have shaped our communities - indeed, who have shaped the course of human history - and women who continue to do so today. Women's History Month is a time to recognize that, despite seemingly insurmountable odds, socioeconomic adversity, systemic exclusion and discrimination throughout history, women have always been at the center of progress and change.

American history is replete with movements led by women. Perhaps the most commonly referenced such movement is the Women's Suffrage Movement, which resulted in ratification of the 19th amendment granting women the right to vote in the United States. Suffragists paved the way for gender-based equality and made a landmark strike for political empowerment of women. Yet we would be remiss not to note that the Suffrage movement's success did not equally reach Black, indigenous, and other women of color, nor did it extend recognition to queer women. The impact and historical significance of social, political, economic, and historical contributions of Black women, indigenous women, other women of color, and queer women are vast yet seldom recognized.

Long before European colonies took root in the Americas, Native American women played important social and political roles in many tribes. Through [work songs](#), enslaved Black women gave voice to the yearning for freedom as well as created a detailed historical record of slavery in America. Asian women were one of the earliest victims of xenophobic laws in America, as the [Page Act of 1875](#) targeted women from multiple Asian countries for exclusion nearly a decade before the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Women of all backgrounds have played central roles in every critical advance in American society. From precolonial times to America's journey to space, from the marches for Suffrage to the farmworkers' movement, from science to sports, from Selma to Stonewall, women have shaped the most impactful moments in American history.

Despite this remarkable history and progress, marginalization and acts of violence against women continue to plague our country and our planet. The world over, women and children remain the primary victims of sexual and domestic violence, trafficking, and socioeconomic imbalances. While women's advancements have reached new heights in many places - including in our own country which for the first time in history elected a woman to be Vice President in 2020 - in many others, women's rights have suffered excruciating setbacks. In Afghanistan, for example, the quality of life and access to opportunity has deteriorated tremendously for women with the return of the Taliban. Much closer to home, women - particularly transwomen of color - continue to be at severely elevated risk of gender-based violence, hate crimes, and marginalization. While inequality or injustice know no borders, women who are unhoused are the most impacted.

According to San Francisco's 2019 Point in Time Count, 35% of the total homeless population identified as female, and another 4% identified as transgender. While homelessness is increasing across all genders, startling data from the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) showed that between 2016 and 2019, the number of individual women living on the streets has risen faster in California than in any other state and, across the country, the number of unhoused transgender people increased by an astronomical 113% during the same period. Nationally, the majority of homeless families are households headed by single women with children under the age of six.

The statistics are indeed stark, but perhaps most alarming is the role that domestic violence plays in the lives of women who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness. Chronically homeless women, especially transgender women, are among the highest at-risk populations for violence and traumatic events. Homeless families in San Francisco were twice as likely as unhoused single adults to attribute their homelessness to domestic violence, and according to the [National Resource Center on Domestic Violence](#), 92% of unhoused mothers reported that they had experienced severe physical or sexual violence during their lives.

While these data points are grim, I find hope in the work many Bay Area communities and leaders are doing to support unhoused women. The theme of this year's Women's History Month is "Providing Healing, Promoting Hope", which recognizes the ceaseless work of caregivers who have provided both healing and hope throughout history. I am incredibly proud of the work ECS' frontline staff - the significant majority of whom are women and a majority of whom are people of color - delivers for women and families through stable affordable housing and meaningful services. We are grateful to be a part of the story of women who rebuild their lives, build a pathway out of despair, and thrive, and I am grateful for the support of our community.

No society can reach its full potential until women - all women - have a fair, equal, and equitable opportunity to shape every aspect of life. Yet, we are not yet there. The median earning for women working full time was just 82% of the median wage earned by men who worked full time in 2019, according to the [latest data available from the US Census Bureau](#). Black and Latina women with a Bachelor's degree [earn just 65%](#) of the median earnings of white men with the same educational attainment.

Still, as the long journey of equity and inclusiveness for women from all walks of life has taught us, progress is possible. ECS will continue to work to do our part to add to that progress.

In solidarity,

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