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An Open Letter to Media Creators:

History is a Noun. Women's History is a Verb.

Lauri Blaire Schulman

“Submitted in partial completion of the Master of Arts Degree at Sarah Lawrence College, May 2017”

Gender is reproduced metaphorically and materially by the media's reinforcing existing ideas of gender. Knowing that gender analysis allows us to see larger systems of dominance and imbalance, I propose that we make content cognizant of gender. Content creators should be attempting not to reproduce existing patterns but to recognize them, push back against them, offer active commentary on them and challenge the status quo. Only through this kind of media content can change take place. A sustained commitment to creating historically accurate content presents the greatest opportunity in the post-network era. This paper considers how creation, development and distribution patterns in popular media--especially high production-value, highly profitable, and largely corporate controlled entertainment--have narrowed our vision of women's history and thus narrowed women's advancement.

Over the course of the twentieth and now early twenty-first centuries, television, film, newspapers, magazines, and digital media have transformed not only how history is recorded, but also how history is perceived and received. The once revolutionary twenty-four-hour news channels have been outpaced by digital communications and live feed applications such as Periscope and Facebook. In a survey conducted in 2014, the Pew Research Center found that 61 percent of Millennials got political news on Facebook, a larger percentage than turned to any other news media.¹ Members of Generation X gather roughly 51 percent of their news from Facebook, and only the Baby Boomers use Facebook for less

¹Pew Research Center, "Among Millennials, Facebook Far Exceeds Any Other Source for Political News" May 28, 2015, accessed August 3, 2017, http://www.journalism.org/2015/06/01/millennials-political-news/pj_15-06-01_millennialmedia08/.

than 50 percent of their news consumption. The Baby Boomers still gather an impressive 39 percent of their news from Facebook, however. Media are no longer confined to strict categories: entertainment, fiction, reportage, and so on. History is no longer what is recorded after it has happened; history is instead what is recorded and reproduced as it is happening.

Media consumers today, know that what that what they see has been edited.

Consumers are aware that objectivity is a myth, that a distinct point of view is inserted into all media. There is something for every taste and opinion; the media serve all. The myth of objectivity has fully faded into the past, along with tube televisions, wired printers and remote controls once called clickers. If one examines popular media creation practices with this understanding, a new kind of content mission develops.

While media makers' instinct has been to isolate so-called women's content—consider, for example, Lifetime², WE³, and Bravo⁴ cable networks and genres such as romantic comedy, soap opera, and docu-soap—an even larger opportunity stands waiting to be seized. Women's issues exist not in isolation but rather in relationship to men's issues; masculinity and femininity are components of the same gender system.

² The Lifetime network garners the highest ratings among women aged eighteen to forty-nine who watch television during the daytime. See Emily L. Newman and Emily Witsell, *The Lifetime Network: Essays on "Television for Women" in the 21st Century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2016), 2.

³Year-over-year comparisons show that WE tv is one of the fastest growing cable networks, ranking fourth among all viewers and fifth among women aged eighteen to fifty-four. Steve Baron. "WE TV Press Release" September 2, 2015, accessed August 5, 2017, <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/network-press-releases/we-tv-summer-ratings-grow-more-than-30-percent-year-to-year-in-key-demographics/>.

⁴In 2016, Bravo got more than 100 million views on video on demand, making it the most popular cable network in that venue. See Bravo Tv Press Release, December 19, 2016, New York, accessed August 5, 2017, <http://www.thefutoncritic.com/ratings/2016/12/19/bravo-media-finishes-2016-with-the-largest-on-air-and-digital-growth-among-the-top-10-ad-supported-cable-networks-242412/20161219bravo02/#YQ9U2Dx4mSMMP0t.99>.

Women's content has always been written and produced in a vacuum of femininity. That is to say that women's content has followed consistent patterns that reflect women's traditional roles as well as fads and consumptive models that change with the times. Certainly the success of both Lifetime and broadcasts of the Women's World Cup⁵, whose content and audiences vary significantly, proves that there is widespread programming aimed at women. Extraordinary films such as *Wonder Woman*⁶ have shattered box office records. Nevertheless, broadcasters and film studios claim that sustained high returns by and large elude them when they produce women's content. Marquis events such as the 2015 Women's World Cup capture enormous audiences only to be followed by smaller tournaments and events with lackluster viewership. *Wonder Woman* with record-breaking box office success will be considered a truly viable model only if its sequel does as well. Like all popular culture, content that conforms to the existing paradigms of gender is influenced by the flavors of the times.

⁵Viewing estimated the titan in home viewing audience to be 764.0 million the largest single match viewing audience to be the final USA v JPN 60.7 million. See Kantar Sport and Internacional Federation I Futbol Asociacion-FIFA 2015 Women's World Cup Canada Television Audience Report (Zurich: Federation Internacional Futbol Association-FIFA, 2015), accessed July 28, 2017, http://resources.fifa.com/mm/document/affederation/tv/02/74/59/85/fwwccanada2015tvaudiencereport_neutral.pdf.

⁶Gross as of July 3, 2017, reported \$707 million. A sequel has yet to be announced. See Bret Lang *Variety* "Wonder Woman Crosses \$400 Million at Domestic Box Off Worldwide," accessed August 10, 2017, <http://variety.com/2017/film/box-office/wonder-woman-box-office-1202519040/>.

These paradigms have limited even the most well-meaning attempts to tell new stories about gender, such as *Hidden Figures*⁷, *Good Girls Revolt*⁸, or even *Transparent*.⁹ By attempting to show and tell, each of these works unwittingly reproduces what already exists. In *Hidden Figures* white women and white men are the savior archetype to black women; though the marketing, trailers for sharing on social media purported that it was entirely a black women's story. In *Good Girls Revolt* Second Wave white feminists lead the charge to set their vaginas free in consciousness-raising meetings while being spurned by their male chauvinist bosses.¹⁰ In *Transparent*, the spoiled Jewish upper-middle-class siblings in Los Angeles tirelessly wade into a swamp of sexuality : their transgender father's and their own, through every sequined-dress drag pageant, lesbian affair, and angry-husband-seeks-divorce storyline. On the surface, these show appear different from television's usual fare, but look more closely: don't they all seem a little clichéd? Have we not seen and read stories like these before? Might something be missing? Because the systems of dominance portrayed in these shows are not defined or re-defined from women's historical points of reference, the storytelling is bound to the metric of difference. This metric of difference is always an exercise of dominance.

⁷Worldwide Box Office Receipts \$229,518,790.00 . See The Numbers, accessed August 5, 2017. <http://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Hidden-Figures#tab=summary>

⁸Nellie Andrea. "Good Girls Revolt': No Season 2 At Amazon, Will Be Shopped Elsewhere," accessed August 5, 2017, <http://deadline.com/2016/12/good-girls-revolt-canceled-no-season-2-amazon-shopped-1201863312/>.

⁹"Transparent" season two averaged a 0.68 rating among adults 18-49 and 1.49 million total adult viewers. See Daniel Holloway. "Amazon's 'Transparent' Lags Behind Netflix, Hulu Shows," *Variety TV*, Accessed August 5, 2017. <http://variety.com/2016/digital/news/amazon-transparent-hulu-netflix-making-a-murderer-112263-catastrophe-1201798269/>.

¹⁰ *Good Girls Revolt* having the "second best debut of any Amazon original content" was canceled after one season. See Nellie Andrea. "Good Girls Revolt': No Season 2 At Amazon, Will Be Shopped Elsewhere," accessed August 5, 2017, <http://deadline.com/2016/12/good-girls-revolt-canceled-no-season-2-amazon-shopped-1201863312/>.

In her collection of essays *Why History Matters*, Gerda Lerner writes, “Making history means form-giving and meaning-giving.”¹¹ Media creators can make history in this way by inserting new meanings and new voices into media to challenge and even replace elitist media estates that have deeply influenced global economic policy, war doctrine, and social interaction. That is to say that a fundamental shift in humanist doctrine is possible, one that eventually eliminates dominance as the primary solution for conflict.

The twenty-first century arrived with new forms of technology, information dissemination that strengthened narrative as the manner by which information is received. Facts, figures, and statistics are no longer the underpinning of knowledge; the story created around the facts has become the pre-eminent arbiter of historical information. The tools to share these stories rapidly have already been created, not only technological tools but also shifts in the relationship between the audience and the creator.

These shifts generated what is currently a loosely-defined sixth estate whose most influential pioneer was Oprah Winfrey. By using herself as a conduit and foil, Oprah Winfrey gave the fifth estate the most dynamic and profound voice in history, beginning with her talk show format. In doing so, she legitimized the rise of a sixth estate. Her creation of the sixth estate is the beginning of a new women’s history opportunity in the synergized media space. The sixth estate is not the reserved space of the professional critic. The sixth estate is the participatory voice of the audience. The sixth estate is not the online professional credentialed journalist, but the respondent in the comments section. The sixth estate is the opinion-as-fact blogger. The sixth estate is the Internet troll. The sixth estate is the comments

¹¹ Gerda Lerner, *Why History Matters Life and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 117.

section on any website. The sixth estate is the Twitter feed, now amplified as lower-third crawl on television news broadcasts. It is a trending topic in a newsroom, rapid-fire market statistics not modified by advantage of time and distance. Pierced by narcissism; It is round-the-clock market analysis, customer voices, political and social violence played out on Facebook and equally in the streets of Milwaukee and Baltimore, and even at the Women's March. The sheer mass of the sixth estate offers the single greatest opportunity in history for a re-creation of the media and as a vehicle for political change.

Oprah Winfrey created the sixth estate by recreating the relationship that users or receivers have to media. In his interview on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, Phil Donahue proclaimed that there was “no other single human being who has done with this media what Oprah has done”¹² To clarify, Phil Donahue observed that, by turning the microphone and camera upon herself, by becoming the subject of her brand, television cameras, and audience, Oprah Winfrey redefined the relationship between presenter and presented. Thus began a transformation of the audience from subject viewer to subject participant. To quote sociologist Eva Illouz, “Oprah Winfrey constructs her public self through an exposition of the private agonies of her soul.”¹³ By commodifying her life and replicating it for the viewer every step of the way as she expanded her brand and media empire, she created a perceived relationship between the audience and the creator: a relationship of equality.

¹²“The Oprah Winfrey Show - Phil Donahue Interview”. (video) Posted May 16, 2013, accessed August 9, 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4REOsCm7w0>.

¹³ Eva Illouz, *Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery: An Essay on Popular Culture*. (New York: Columbia University Press 2003), 41.

Women’s advancement and the advancement of other historically underrepresented or misrepresented people have a direct relationship with access to media control, specifically editorial control. While women have long had significant buying power, their influence over media creation and curating had been limited by lack of ownership and access. With the rise of Oprah Winfrey, and the women who have followed her, such as Arianna Huffington, and with technological developments like Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat and live commentary feeds on every major media news outlet, women have an opportunity for advancement. The traditional model reserved editorial access for owners, but with the rise of the sixth estate, or the participant-viewer, there now exists a large mass of voices talking back to media and exercising control over the traditional editors.

A look at the work of Arianna Huffington, another pioneer of the sixth estate, makes the pattern clearer still. As she wrote in 2009, “The great upheaval the news industry is going through is the result of a perfect storm of transformative technology, the advent of sites such as Craigslist, dramatic changes in consumer habits, and the dire impact the economic crisis has had on advertising.”¹⁴ In this statement, Arianna Huffington grasped technology and its determinant nature with gusto. Oprah’s sheer net worth¹⁵, global exposure and economic influence on the publishing industry disproved notions that women lack ability and authority in media. Arianna Huffington quickly recognized her own authority and turned it into a network of reporters. If Oprah anointed the audience, the subject-participant, with

¹⁴<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/may/11/newspapers-web-media-pay-wall> .

¹⁵Forbes Staff. “Forbes' 2016 List Of America's Richest Self-Made Women.” June, 1 2016, accessed August 7, 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbespr/2016/06/01/forbes-2016-list-of-americas-richest-self-made-women/#7a079d851747>.

authority, Arianna Huffington put it to work as an often unpaid army of bloggers who were sometimes touted as journalists but lacked vetting, expertise, and experience. In this respect bloggers are storytellers, and Arianna Huffington made them legitimate journalists.

Even if the *Huffington Post* did not pay its blogger journalists, they received compensation in the form of notoriety, followers, likes, and publication to a broad audience. The blog thus became a traditional commodified product, with editorial control exercised to ensure the most profitable outcome. Huffington's bloggers are sixth estate members in search of rewards and gain. Criticism of the fourth estate—old-fashioned journalism—is part of the mix. As Huffington has written of old media: “the problem wasn't that important stories weren't being covered. It was that they weren't being covered in the obsessive way that breaks through the din in our multimedia universe.”¹⁶

It is a universe in which gender systems shape everyday interactions. On August 15, 2016, during on-air coverage of Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, BBC reporter John Iverdale posed this question to the British tennis player Andy Murray, who had won a gold medal: “You're the first person to ever win two Olympic tennis gold medals, that's an extraordinary feat, isn't it?” Murray's response: “Well to defend the singles title, I think Venus and Serena have won about four each.... It's obviously not an easy thing to do, and I had to fight unbelievably hard to get it tonight as well.”¹⁷ Sports newscasts, blogs, Facebook pages, and

¹⁶ Arianna Huffington, *The Huffington Post Complete Guide to Blogging*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008.), 4.

¹⁷ BSC News. (video) Aug 18, 2016 accessed August 1, 2017 : <https://youtu.be/ISgf31RpRTk>

websites lit up with headlines such as “Andy Murray Defends Serena And Venus Williams & The Insidious Sexism That Plagues Them.”¹⁸

At a televised press conference held on July 12, 2017, the ninth day of that year’s Wimbledon tennis tournament in London, Andy Murray, ranked No. 1 in men’s singles, had a brief exchange with an unidentified reporter. Badly injured, Murray had just lost to Sam Querrey, an American ranked No. 27. The upset made him the first American men’s player to reach the semi-final of any major tennis tournament since 2009. Addressing Murray, the reporter began, “Sam Querrey is the first U.S. player to reach a major semi-final since 2009.” Murray quickly corrected the statement by interjecting “male player.”¹⁹ The reporter responded, “I beg your pardon,” Murray reasserted himself: “MALE PLAYER.” The reporter chuckled, “That’s for sure.”²⁰ Within hours social media, blogs, and sports reports filled once again with coverage of Andy Murray’s heroic recognition of women. A BBC headline read, “Andy Murray corrects journalist’s casual sexism”²¹ and the article quoted his mother, Judy Murray’s tweet: “That’s my boy.”²² To be clear, in the years 2009-2017, the American player Serena Williams won more than ten major titles, and her sister Venus

¹⁸ Joseph D. Lyons. . 2016. “Andy Murray Defends Serena and Venus Williams and the insidious Sexism that Plagues Them.” *Bustle*, Aug 15. Accessed July 29, 2017. <https://www.bustle.com/articles/178624-andy-murray-defends-serena-and-venus-williams-the-insidious-sexism-that-plagues-them>.

¹⁹BBC News. “Andy Murray Corrects Journalist’s ‘Casual Sexism’” Accessed July 12, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-40589164/andy-murray-corrects-journalist-s-casual-sexism>.

²⁰BBC News. “Andy Murray Corrects Journalist’s ‘Casual Sexism’” Accessed July 12, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-40589164/andy-murray-corrects-journalist-s-casual-sexism>.

²¹BBC News. “Andy Murray Corrects Journalist’s ‘Casual Sexism’” Accessed July 12, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-40589164/andy-murray-corrects-journalist-s-casual-sexism>.

²²Judy Murray. Twitter, July 12, 2017 Accessed July 13, 2017. <https://twitter.com/JudyMurray/status/885181694319484929>.

Williams advanced at Wimbledon in 2016 and 2017. Certainly, Murrays’s acknowledgment of the sisters and interjections of the word “male” made visible that the reporters were leaving women out, but these incidents are less significant for what they tell us about Murray’s character than for what they reveal about the gender system: the fact that male has always been the default and men always the unmarked gender imagined to represent all of humankind. As Eileen L. McDonagh and Paura Pappano assert in their book on the gender segregation of sports,

Dividing sports by sex—segregating organized athletics based on gender—doesn’t reliably reflect actual physical differences between males and female at all. Rather, it reflects antiquated social patterns and false beliefs. And what’s more enforces sometimes badly, sometimes subtly, the notion that men’s activities, men’s power are the real thing and women’s are not. Women’s Sports, like women’s power, are second class.²³

For the journalist, advanced enough in his career to be credentialed at Wimbledon, tennis is men’s tennis, and women’s tennis is a second class sport, even if this determination lives in his subconscious.

The narrative surrounding Andy Murray is that he supports women’s tennis; while this is true, he is also is correcting historical assertions. What we repeatedly see in these interview exchanges is that simple facts have been ignored or written out of the record, and Murray, it seems, is offering simple corrections. The media then portrays these corrections as advocacy on behalf “women’s rights.”²⁴

²³ Eileen L McDonagh and Laura Pappano. *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate Is Not Equal in Sports*.(Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008).Preface X.

²⁴ “Battle of the Sexes Trailer” (video). Fox Searchlight Pictures, Los Angeles, California. Accessed July 15, 2017. <http://www.foxsearchlight.com/battleofthesexes/>

In the 2017 press conference, Murray did not specifically mention either Williams sister but simply inserted the word “male.”²⁵In essence, this reinforced his position as male, his masculinity as a male player. Yes, he implied that American female players had advanced to the semi-finals, but even on the second opportunity to correct the reporter he did not take the opportunity to correct the record fully by inserting women tennis players and their achievements. In 2017 outstanding achievements of the Williams sisters are a given in popular discourse, but over time might that change? In twenty or thirty years, would a casual viewer of this clip automatically know that Murray was referencing Serena or Venus Williams? Yes, Serena Williams is relevant and popular in 2017; yes, Venus Williams advanced to semi-finals the day after Murray’s press conference; but he mentions neither of them. Murray only inserts the word “male,” enforcing and recoding the masculine position on camera. This is where the content shift is required. In reply to the social media and blog posts lauding Murrays response to “casual sexism,” I ask the question whether putatively *empowered* female social media audiences—consumers of *Broadly*, *Vice*, *Salon*, and so on—might do better to examine gender inequality in athletes’ pay and media coverage than to generate a tsunami of thanks to a man who merely recognized that women exist.

Interestingly, it was Venus Williams in 2007 who finally forced Wimbledon to pay women prize money equal to men’s. This fight began in 1973, when Billie Jean King threatened to boycott the US Open. These women, separated by nearly forty years

²⁵BBC News. “Andy Murray Corrects Journalist's 'Casual Sexism’” Accessed July 12, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-40589164/andy-murray-corrects-journalist-s-casual-sexism>.

demonstrate an influence their sport and television rights so great influential that the mere threat of a boycott forced a change.²⁶

Although King won tournament after tournament in the 1970s, she is most widely remembered for beating Bobby Riggs in straight sets in 1973, in an exhibition match billed as “The Battle of the Sexes.” The estimated viewing audience was 90 million around the world.²⁷ Many thought of it as a women’s sporting event, but a match in which just one of the two players is female can hardly be dubbed a women’s event. To further the point, this match resulted from a challenge by Bobby Riggs, who sought to prove that to prove that women were lesser athletes, something he succeeded in doing earlier the same year when he beat the No 1. ranked women’s player, Margaret Court.²⁸

Premiering at the Toronto Film Festival in 2017, Hollywood’s portrayal of King’s defeat of Riggs--*Battle of the Sexes*, written by Simon Beaufoy, directed by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris (the team behind *Little Miss Sunshine*) and starring Academy Award winner Emma Stone as Billie Jean King and Steve Carrell as Bobby Riggs—has all the makings of a feel-good popcorn pleaser. The trailer features Bobby Riggs calling Billie Jean King in the middle of the night to pitch the match: “Eureka, Billie Jean! It’s Bobby Riggs. I have a great idea—male chauvinist pig versus hairy-legged feminist. You’re still a feminist, right?” She replies, “I’m a tennis player who happens to be a woman...And by the way, I shave my legs.” Flashing gold letters then announce, “Based on The True Story.” Billie Jean King later looks

²⁶Allen Guttman. *Women’s Sports: A History*. (New York: Columbia University Press 1991) 210.

²⁷ Allen Guttman. *Women’s Sports: A History*. (New York: Columbia University Press 1991) 210.

²⁸Allen Guttman. *Women’s Sports: A History*. (New York: Columbia University Press 1991) 210.

longingly into her girlfriend's eyes and says, "I'm gonna be the best. That way I can really change things."²⁹

This is the truth, says the screen: believe it. These few words, placed in the opening pages of a novel, at the beginning of a television show or movie, or even in a film trailer no longer imply historical fact; they have become synonymous with historical fact to an audience whose thirst for facts, true or not, had increased along with the sheer volume of information available through the internet and its associated distribution technology. As media scholar June Deery observes, "While many viewers recognize that contrivance is used to make actuality more entertaining, they value and try to locate the real and the raw."³⁰ As popular media gear up to herald the movie about Billie Jean King's triumph over Bobby Riggs, let us not forget the historical evidence that the match had no quantifiable effect on women's pay in the tennis. Nearly forty years had to pass before Venus Williams closed the gap. And even as late as 2017, women at Wimbledon did not receive equal center-court exposure, which severely limited their broadcast air time as well as exposure to fans. Indeed, Billie Jean King is a "champion of women's rights."³¹ By tying, fact and fiction so closely together through mythography, the cult of personality, and historical fiction about personal, media productions like *Battle of the Sexes* stall forward movement. That is to say, the movement for gender equality in tennis still has much to achieve. The mythography that

²⁹ "Battle of the Sexes Trailer" (video). Fox Searchlight Pictures, Los Angeles, California. Accessed July 15, 2017. <http://www.foxsearchlight.com/battleofthesexes/>

³⁰ June Deery. *Reality TV*. (Cambridge: Polity Press. 2015). 43.

³¹ "Battle of the Sexes Trailer" (video). Fox Searchlight Pictures, Los Angeles, California. Accessed July 15, 2017. <http://www.foxsearchlight.com/battleofthesexes/>

Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs and thus triumphed over male chauvinism some forty-four years ago is unlikely to advance the work still to be completed. A feel-good, we-have-won message is sometimes warranted; battles have indeed been won—but not the war.

Battle of Sexes exemplifies larger patterns in women's media and women's development. The positioning of Billie Jean King as our hero, and filmmakers' using the vehicle of historical fiction, which especially lends itself to dramatic clarity, asserts a historical truth. But inattention to the systems of gender at work undercuts historical accuracy and thus sustenance for a sustained push for women's equality. By binding the story to a hero, the filmmakers are using an empowerment approach, a cult of celebrity technique, in the specific paradigm of masculinity versus femininity. *Battle of the Sexes* is a precise example of media reproducing an worn-out historical narrative in which a heroic woman challenged by a man beats him and thus the battle for women's equality. In this rendition of the tale, "Based on The True Story" implies that the film is indeed the true and final history of women's equality in tennis. It is not.

As creators and re-creators, media professionals, we are simply failing to accept that narratives based on true stories do not necessarily tell the most important truths. We must reproduce a new kind of narrative form that introduces a break from traditional silos of behavior and understanding. Stories of individual heroes such as Billie Jean King are particularly prevalent in the post-network era. These stories are compact and easy to disseminate by sixth estate bloggers, and they stories are easily shared on Facebook, the largest media and news source for Generation X, Millennials and a large swath of Baby Boomers, but hero narratives do not look past individual wins. They fall short of challenging

the paradigm of masculinity and femininity. They are not history but rather mythography—a dramatic device used in service of effective storytelling that seeks to inform, entertain, and tug on emotions. By blending historical fiction and a rabid celebrity culture with the technological shifts, media are presenting women's history in ways that unknowingly and unwittingly reinforce the very system that history seeks to deconstruct. Mythography creates historical fictions that are accepted and reproduced in collective memory. This is particularly unfortunate with respect to women's history since male is the default gender, from whose point of view history is commonly written. Although the media creation and distribution business depend on change over time, when we bind women's empowerment or success stories to heroic mythography, change over time is obscured or written out entirely. Condensed to a hero story, women's history loses all connection to the ample historical evidence that change requires multiple agents and sustained commitment over long periods of time.

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