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From 2020 to 1920 and Back: One Hundred Years from the 19th Amendment

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Abstract

In January 2021, A Black, South Asian woman, Kamala Harris, has risen to the position of U.S. vice president at the same moment as the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. The article considers the changes that have occurred during the last 100 years in order to question the narrative which describes the conquest of suffrage as a political experience based essentially on white and middle-class women. Emphasizing the intertwining of race and gender involves striking a bare nerve in the history of the U.S. women's suffrage movement and the battle for political representation.

Keywords: Women's Suffrage Movement; United States; 19th Amendment; Voting Rights Act.

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Democrat Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election will be remembered as a turning point in the history of the political representation of women in the United States. For the first time, a Black, South Asian woman, Kamala Harris, has risen to the position of vice president of the United States in the year celebrating the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment granting American women the right to vote, and the *55*th anniversary of the approval of the Voting Rights Act that dismantled the barriers that had prevented African-Americans from voting, especially in the southern states. We cannot speak of the definitive breaking of the glass ceiling yet, although the lesion that has been produced appears to be quite definitive; and the marble complex located in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda—with the statues depicting the founding mothers of U.S. suffragism and a rough block—will still have to wait to be completed with the statue of the first female president. However, the event was rightly celebrated in comments from the press and the symbolic importance of the victory was highlighted by Kamala Harris's speech, delivered in the aftermath of when the fateful 270 electoral votes were achieved. Harris, dressed in white—the symbolic color of suffragist struggles—described her victory as the result of a path of struggle and of the activism of black, Asian, white, Native American, Latin women "who paved the way for this moment tonight. Women who fought and sacrificed so much for equality, liberty and justice for all, including the Black women, who are too often overlooked, but so often prove that they are the backbone of our democracy." Consequently, she continued, "Tonight, I reflect on their struggle, their determination and the strength of their vision—to see what can be unburdened by what has been—I stand on their shoulders."

Harris wanted to pick up the baton from the past generations while, at the same time, she stressed the need to look towards the future: "while I may be the first woman in this office, I won't be the last."[1]

Despite the inevitable rhetoric, Harris' speech presents aspects that deserve to be emphasized because they go beyond a "neutral" celebration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment. First of all because this anniversary is connected to that of the Voting Rights Act, thus introducing the close intertwining of gender citizenship and racial citizenship as a problematic element in the construction of the American democratic sphere. During the election campaign, and especially after Biden's decision to propose her candidacy for vice president, Harris constantly claimed to be a "black" woman, linking herself to figures such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, up to the most recent, Barbara Jordan and Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman to participate in the primaries for the presidential nomination in 1972. A claim that in the 2020 election was rooted in the need to recognize the central role that African-American activists such as Stacey Abrams, Cori Bush, a Black Lives Matter activist, had in the mobilization of voting for the Democratic Party and, above all, against the presidency of Donald Trump. In an article published in the African-American magazine *Essence*, Kamala Harris wrote: "Black women hold the power in this election. […] That's why generations of Black women marched and organized and fought to give us this right. Many never got to vote themselves. But they pressed on knowing that, one day, Black women would be a force in our democracy. That, when it mattered most, we would be the ones to mobilize our communities and vote for what's right: honesty and integrity, decency and dignity, equality and justice."[2]

Emphasizing the intertwining of race and gender involves striking a bare nerve in the history of the U.S. women's suffrage movement and the battle for political representation. That is, it questions that narrative which draws a straight line from the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, a political myth in the American suffragist movement,[3] to suffrage that is based essentially on the experience of white and middle-class women, obscuring the fact that after 1920, "the experiences of millions of women that remained excluded from the franchise even after the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified."[4] Furthermore, it does not sufficiently focus on the tensions and contradictions that have historically involved

1. Kamala Harris, Transcript of victory speech, *The Associated Press*, November 7, 2020.

2. Quoted in Taryn Finley, "Kamala Harris Elected As First Black, Asian American Vice President," *Huffington Post*, November 7, 2020.

3. Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls. Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

4. Celeste Montoya, "From Seneca to Shelby. Intersectionality and Women's Voting Rights," in *100 Years of the Nineteenth Amendment. An Appraisal of Women's Political Activism*, eds. Holly J. McCammon and Lee Ann Banaszak (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 107.

women's suffragism and activism, which are far from being free from the more or less explicit acceptance of ethnic and racial stereotypes. Even in 1892, Anna Julia Cooper, in *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South*, highlighted the peculiarity of the condition of black women, the double oppression they experienced as black and as women. In the same year, Ida B. Wells Barnett denounced in *Southern Horrors* the hypocrisy of a white supremacist ideology that legitimized itself by defending the honor of white women, removing the burden of violence and oppression that black women experienced.[5]

A shadow that continues to make its effects felt even today. As has been pointed out by prominent Black leaders by contesting the choice of the governor of California on his appointment of Alex Padilla, a Mexican American, instead of appointing a black woman to take Vice President Kamala Harris' Senate seat, (there have been only two black women in the Senate so far, Carol Moseley Braun, elected in 1993, and Kamala Harris). "To be a Black woman in the United States of America is to exist in a state of constant dualities. Progress and setback, triumph and defeat, celebration and disappointment. [...] That's because we exist in a system that oppresses us through both racism and sexism."[6] On the eve of the vote, African-American political scientist Niambi Carter of Howard University said in an interview with *The Washington Post*: "I think a lot of times when we talk about women, we're talking about white women. [...] I think a lot of times when we're talking about Blacks, we're talking about Black men.' Instead, for the first time, the victory of a 'women of color' was appearing, she observed, which would have a seismic impact on the trajectory of history."[7]

So, it seemed that Kamala Harris' victory would be able to overcome the trauma of Hillary Clinton's defeat in 2016, even if the election campaign was not free from obstacles and limits. It continued to envision the strength of the stereotypes that had dominated in 2016 and even more during the electoral campaign of the first woman candidate for vice-presidency, the Democrat, Geraldine Ferraro in 1984. It happened again in 2008 when the Republican, John McCain chose Sarah Palin as his running mate.

In 1984, Walter Mondale's choice to nominate Geraldine Ferraro was the result of the mobilization and pressure from women. In 1983, a group of activists from the Democratic Party in Washington, the so-called "Team A," was convinced that the conditions were in place for pressure to be exerted on the party to nominate a woman for the vice presidency. However, the modification of the internal party rules, following the work of the McGovern-Fraser commission in 1972, allowed a greater presence of women among the delegates at the convention, as well as representatives of minorities and young people. At the time, however, there were no female senators or women serving as governor—functions that were considered necessary in order to aspire to a position on the presidential ticket. The choice was addressed to Geraldine Ferraro, a congresswoman, a lawyer, a *new woman* who seemed to be the symbol for women's ability to be able to combine family, work and political ambitions. When she was nominated for vice president, she recalled Joanna Howes, one of the women on "Team A," "the crowds came out, parents bringing daughters, it was a phenomenon. [...] In my mind, that lead us to figuring out how much energy there really was to do better with women in politics."[8] In reality, on one hand, the electoral campaign highlighted the strength of gender stereotypes, which led journalists to question the ability and authority of Geraldine Ferraro.[9] On the other hand, as Shirley Chisholm recalled when retracing her unfortunate presidential candidacy in 1972, "of my two handicaps, being

5. Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise. 1792 to the Present* (New York: The Modern Library, 2010), 125 et seq. See also Elisabetta Vezzosi, "The International Strategy of African American Women at the Columbian Exposition and Its Legacy: Pan-Africanism, Decolonization and the Human Rights," in *Moving Bodies, Displaying Nations. National Cultures, Race and Gender in World Expositions Nineteenth to Twenty-first Century*, ed. Guido Abbattista (Trieste: EUT, 2014), 67-88.

6. Chauncey K. Robinson, "Newsome's pick in Alex Padilla is historic. But why does it have to come at the expense of Black women?," *The Lily-Washington Post*, December 23, 2020.

7. Chelsea Janes, "Kamala Harris could be quickly on the Brink of a Historic Leap," *The Washington Post*, November 2, 2020.

8. Quoted in ibid.

9. Raffaella Baritono, "Un paese latecomer? Donne e rappresentanza politica negli Stati Uniti contemporanei," in *Elette ed eletti. Rappresentanza e rappresentazioni di genere nell'Italia Repubblicana*, ed. Patrizia Gabrielli (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2020), 71-88.

female put many more obstacles in my path than being black."[10]

Despite the "trauma" of the 2016 election campaign, (and in some ways also of the 2008 Democratic primary), through the use of sexist stereotypes regarding Hillary Clinton,[11] even Kamala Harris, as previously mentioned, was not exempt from sexist and racist attacks by Donald Trump and his supporters. Zignal Labs, a company that deals with media analytics, had, after Biden's announcement of his choice of Harris as vice presidential running mate, recorded more than 1 million cases of misinformation, a delegitimization campaign with the aim of questioning his eligibility, insinuating that his professional career was favored by romantic relationships (for example with the hashtag #HeelsUpHarris). Also integral to these strategies was the distortion of her name, Trump's definition of a "monster," the appearance of memes that superimposed Harris's face on images of sex workers, the use of sexist expressions, the stigmatization of her facial expressions or body language in order to fit her into the stereotype of an "angry black woman."[12] Trump stated, "That's no way for a woman to become the first president, that's for sure. […] And if a woman is going to become the first president of the United States, it can't be her. […] This is not what people want, as then she comes in through the backdoor. This would not be what people want, especially because it's her."[13] "Her," because according to Trump's delegitimization strategy, Kamala Harris did not even deserve to be mentioned and when he did, he called her a radical, a socialist, or rather a "female socialist."

Women candidates must constantly deal with the so-called "double bind" in order to avoid the use of gender stereotypes, that is, on one hand, they must demonstrate a certain aggressiveness in order not to be considered weak; on the other hand, their behavior must not be too decisive in order to not be judged as too aggressive.[14]

However, if the analysis of women's electoral campaigns shows elements of continuity, it is also necessary to consider the changes that have occurred not only in the last 100 years after the 19th amendment, but especially during the 1980s. Unlike 1984, Harris's candidacy comes at a time when the presence of women in legislative and political bodies is increasingly numerous, even if the United States continues to not be one of the most advanced countries from the point of view of gender representation. In fact, according to the latest data from the Inter-Parliament Union, the United States ranks 87th in world rankings with 23.4% of women in the House and 25% in the Senate.[15]

In 1974, Jeane Kirkpatrick, one of the founders of the Center for American Women and Politics, denounced that 50 years after the federal amendment was passed, not only had there been no candidates for presidency or vice-presidency, but there were no women on the Supreme Court, in the Senate, or in the Presidential Cabinet, "no woman serving as governor of a major state, no woman mayor of a major city."[16] In 1974, women made up 4% of the members of Congress and 6% of members of state legislatures. The 1970s, however, in the wake of the great feminist mobilizations, shook up the stagnant picture of female representation. In 1968 the first African-American representative, Shirley Chisholm, was elected and was the only one present in Congress until 1972 and who, as mentioned, advanced her candidacy for the 1972 presidential election. In 1974, Ellen Grasso was elected Governor of Connecticut, and in 1976, Dixy Lee Ray of Washington State. In other words, a new gen-

10. Quoted in K.A. Hamlin, "Madame President: A History of the Women Who Ran Before Hillary," *Origins*, 9 (2016): 7; Ellen Fitzpatrick, *The Highest Glass Ceiling: Women's Quest for the American Presidency* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 214.

11. See the book on Hillary Clinton's candidacy.

12. "Kamala Harris Targeted with More Misinformation Than Mike Pence, Data Shows," *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 2020.

13. Matthew Choi, "Trump says a Harris vice-presidency is 'no way for a woman' to become president," *Politico.com*, September 17, 2020.

14. Donatella Campus, "Gli stereotipi di genere e le donne in politica," in *L'immagine della donna leader*, ed. Donatella Campus (Bologna: Bononia University Press 2010), 32.

15. See the updated data on the site of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=10&year=2020/. At present, the available data have been updated to October 2020.

16. Cited in Christina Wolbrecht, "Introduction: What We Saw at the Revolution. Women in American Politics and Political Science," in *Political Women and American Democracy*, eds. Christina Wolbrecht, Karen Beckwith, and Lisa Baldez (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

eration of women was beginning to emerge, (often in the past the women present in Congress were the "widows" of deputies who had died during their term of office).

The growing political polarization, which was the result of a conservative hegemony sanctioned by the presidency of Ronald Reagan, from the ultimate failure of the battle for the Equal Rights Amendment and what Susan Faludi called a counterattack,[17] in the 1980s led to NOW's decision to abandon the nonpartisan position to support the Democratic Party. In 1985, EMILY's List was founded to financially support women's candidacy as long as they were pro-choice. Finally, in 1987, the Fund for Feminist Majority was created with the aim of promoting women's equality and re-addressing national policy priorities from a gender perspective.

All this favored a turning point that led to the definition of 1992 as the "Year of Women." In fact, with the opening of Congress in 1993, the number of women went from four to seven in the Senate (5 Democrats and 2 Republicans), and from 28 to 47 women in the House (35 Democrats and 12 Republicans). The women present in Congress increased from 32 to 54, beginning a path of progressive increase without the stop and go of the past.

The mobilization favored the Democratic Party in particular, even if the victory was only partial. Two years later, in 1994, the mid-term elections saw a further, albeit limited, increase in the presence of women (3 components), but this time primarily thanks to the Republican Party since some of the Democrats were not re-elected.

What were the factors behind this increase besides the profound changes in an American society following the impact of the clashes of the 1960s and 1970s? First of all, there was an exceptional presence of "open" seats in which there was no incumbent running for re-election, which was particularly significant in a context in which the re-election rate of deputies and senators was higher than 90% in some cases. Therefore, it was necessary to add two other elements. On one hand, the conservative hegemony that had characterized the Reagan era and, in particular, the presence of a religious right that questioned reproductive rights, civil liberties, social policies and welfare. On the other hand, there was an echo of the controversy raised by the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill case. In 1991, Clarence Thomas, the first African American judge appointed by George Bush Sr. to the Supreme Court, was charged with sexual harassment by Anita Hill, a collaborator of his, also an African American. The issue was at the center of the debate that opened in the Senate for the ratification of the judge's appointment and which saw Hill's transformation from the victim to the accused. The hearing in which a black woman faced a committee composed of only male senators, instilled in the women's movement an awareness of the urgency to enter the *smoking rooms* of American politics.

The mobilization of women had shown its strength when a large March for Women's Lives was organized in April 1992 in defense of freedom of choice, in which 750,000 women and men participated in Washington, D.C.

In 1992, women's mobilization rewarded Bill Clinton as the winner with 45% of the female vote against 41% of the male vote; a difference that widened, in 1996, when 54% of women voted for Clinton compared to 43% by men.

The Clinton presidency seemed to pick up on this new wave of women's activism that rewarded the Democratic Party. His administration stood out not only due to the presence of women (which made up 39% of the White House staff), but also due to the "quality" of the appointments themselves, such as Janet Reno in 1993 as Minister of Justice and Madeleine Albright in 1997 as Secretary of State, who were the first two women present in the president's "inner Cabinet." The attention to female constituency ended up influencing the political choices of the administration which promoted the approval of laws, such as the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 and especially the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 which strengthened the laws for rape cases and that earmarked funds to combat domestic violence.

The 1992 elections also made the gender gap structural. From 1980, actually, the quantity of women voters are more numerous than that of men and, as a whole, they vote more for the Democratic Party than for the Republican Party. These trends were also confirmed by the 2020 elections. According to provisional data published on the website of the Center for American Women and Politics, the differential between the women's vote in favor of Biden and the men's vote varies from 11 to

17. Susan Faludi, Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women (New York: Vintage, 1993).

16 points. The 2020 elections, even more than those relating to previous elections, have highlighted the strong internal differentiations in the women's vote, which was far from a monolithic bloc, according to criteria of ethnicity, race, age, and social condition. The vote of white women favored Trump with percentages ranging from 46% to 55% depending on the polling institutions considered, while 90% of African American women and 69% of Hispanic women voted for Biden. Likewise, the youngest women—those from 18 to 29 years—voted for the Democratic candidate. Finally, only 28% of evangelical Christian women voted for Biden and the rate dropped to 17% for those not having a college education.[18]

The theme of diversity, also from the point of view of elected representatives, then, characterized the results of the 2018 mid-term elections, when the number of women in Congress reached 126 thanks above all to the mobilization of democratic women. There were many "first times" with a strong symbolic content that characterized congressional geography, such as, for the first time Native American, Muslim or openly lesbian women were elected. For the first time, Tennessee and Arizona elected a woman to represent their states in the Senate.

Some of these have stood out for their more radical positions, so much so that they have been defined as "the squad"—Alexandra Ocasio Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, Ihlan Omar, Rachida Tlaib—to which, in 2020, activists who had distinguished themselves in the movement Black Lives Matter were added, such as Jamaal Bowman (New York), Cori Bush (St. Louis) and Maria Newman (Chicago).

A success due, as stated by Alexandra Ocasio Cortez, not so much to the party, but to grassroots mobilization and to clear and progressive issues.

The mobilization of African-American women, in particular, of activists of the Black Lives Matter movement and those who over the years have become experienced in grass-roots movements—including Occupy Wall Street—to movements that fight for the issues on social reproduction, for health, for the defense of Roe vs. Wade on access to abortion, and for social justice policies, seem in recent years to confirm Joan W. Scott's statement, according to which "gender constructs politics."[19] Above all, the conditions seem to be in place for a link between two areas of women's political activism that have historically proceeded in parallel, but which have not always succeeded in acting, intertwining and supporting each other against the obstacles and fractures posed by a political and party system that has not always been in favour of the demands of women's movements. Specifically, on one hand, this is an activism that has been structured, above all, within the public sphere, interacting with the administrative structures of the state—as in the case of women's clubs starting from the Progressive Era, or with interactions with the federal Women's Bureau—and which has traditionally been nonpartisan, even in the aftermath of 1920. On the other hand, it is an activism within political parties that has always clashed with mechanisms of power and distrust towards women. Although the individual biographies show how there has been an interpenetration of the two spheres, the peculiar construction in the United States, of a public sphere divided by gender lines, structured from the beginning of American democracy, with the political centrality of political parties from one side and the creation of a real benevolent empire that is traditionally female on the other, and then from the vast and branched network of civic associations (some having a transnational nature), has caused the two areas to be structured using different methods and languages and strongly marked by gender differences.[20]

Not entirely paradoxically, the dialectic between grassroots action and party presence has historically concerned the experience of conservative women as well.[21] The contribution of female grassroots activism has been particularly relevant in the rise of the conservative movement and in the process of leading the Republican Party into increasingly traditionalist and conservative positions. In the 1950s, figures such as Vivian Kellems played a key role in the mobilization policy against fiscal policies that were considered to be the expression of an oppressive state. In 1964, Phyllis Schlafly, with her

18. https://cawp.rutgers.edu/presidential-poll-tracking-2020/

19. Joan Scott, "Unanswered Questions," AHR Forum, *The American Historical Review*, 113 (2008).

20. Paula Baker, "*The Domestication of Politics*," *American Historical Review*, 3 (1984). I refer to my "Ripensare il 'politico': genere e sfera pubblica nella storia politica statunitense," in *Vingt-cinq ans après. Les femmes au rendez-vous de l'histoire. Actes du colloque de Rome*, eds. E. Asquer, A. Bellavitis, G. Calvi, et al. (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2019).

21. Catherine E. Rymph, *Republican Women. Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage through the Rise of the New Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

hugely successful pamphlet, *A Choice, not an Echo*, contributed to the nomination of Barry Goldwater and later, with her organization, *Stop ERA*, she emerged as one of the leaders of the conservative movement. Conservative women who, especially in recent decades, have also made a selective reading of the tradition of suffragist and feminist activism. One of the more conservative women's organizations took on the name of the mother of U.S. suffragism, Susan B. Anthony; in 2008 Sarah Palin was not only a darling of conservative rightists like William Kristol, but she was also part of a group called *Feminists for Life*. The success of Republican women in the 2020 elections, (women will increase from 22 to 36, so much so that Donald Trump spoke of the Year of Republican Women), is due to activists who formed groups and Political Action Committees to promote female Republican candidates, with names like *VIEW* (*Value in Electing Women*), *SheShouldRun* or *SheThePeople*, which "sound" feminist.

In 1928, Eleanor Roosevelt, a leading figure within the Democratic Party of New York, wrote:

> Women have been voting for ten years. But have they achieved actual political equality with men? No. They go through the gesture of going to the polls; their votes are solicited by politicians; and they possess the external aspect of equal rights. But it is mostly a gesture without real power. With some outstanding exceptions, women who have gone into politics are refused serious consideration by the men leaders. Generally they are treated most courteously, to be sure, but what they want, what they have to say, is regarded as of little weight. In fact, they have no actual influence or say at all in the consequential councils of their parties. In small things they are listened to; but when it comes to asking for important things they generally find they are up against a blank wall.[22]

According to Eleanor, women should have organized themselves "like women," within parties, through the constitution of real female political machines capable of imposing women's candidacies at the highest levels; above all, it was necessary to "learn to speak the language of men," understand the devices of the machine and take possession of its mechanisms to turn them in favor of women.

Eleanor Roosevelt thus encouraged to overcome the divisions between female activism which, from the 19th century, used the language of the separate spheres and maternalism, as well as the language within the party. She acted as a bridge between the two areas, also by using the first ladyship as a sort of bully pulpit to favor the presence and representation of women in legislative, executive and administrative contexts.

In some ways, this is what Alexandra Ocasio Cortez or Stacey Abrams urged women to do when they emphasized the need to focus on organization and on the work of mobilizing and aggregating consent.

One hundred years after the adoption of the 19th amendment, the position of women in politics has certainly advanced. It has also progressed since 1984 and 1992. Political scientists have pointed out that women have the same ability to attract financing as men, and when the race is open they have the same chance to win: "when women run, women win." As in 1928, the crucial problem seems to rest on the relationship with party apparatuses and with distrust of the party leadership towards female candidates. Women are not recognized as having a "political" vocation or the legitimacy of a professional path and by virtue of this "weak vocational status" they do not have the same support as men from parties and interest groups.[23]

From this point of view, if the presence of the first black woman vice president represents a turning point, as mentioned above, and adds to the growing presence of women within presidential administrations—from the appointment of Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State in 1997—the question arises as to whether, in the United States, the presence of women in places of political decision is more highly favored by co-optation processes rather than by traditional mechanisms of political representation.

22. Eleanor Roosevelt, "Women Must Learn to Play the Game as Men Do," *Red Book Magazine*, 50 (April 1928): 78-9, 141-42, https://erpapers.columbian.gwu.edu/women-must-learn-play-game-men-do.

23. Kira Sanbonmatsu, *Where Women Run: Gender and Party in the American States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006); Jo Freeman, *We Will Be Heard. Women's Struggles for Political Power in the United States* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

From 1992, as mentioned above, women's access to top positions in the U.S. political system, at the federal level, has appeared to be more due to the result of presidential choices. After 1920, in fact, the aspirations of women to compete for the presidential office, starting with that of Margaret Chase Smith in 1964 and continuing with Shirley Chisholm in 1972, as well as that of Elizabeth Dole in 1999 to reach the 2016 election with the presence of Hillary Clinton, the first candidate of one of the two major parties (the others had withdrawn into the campaign for the primary), were faced with obstacles and barriers. From 1992, however, presidents have appointed women to key departmental positions, such as that of Justice (the first was Janet Reno in 1993), or as Secretaries of State (Madeleine Albright in 1997, Condoleeza Rice in 2005, Hillary Clinton in 2009), or appointed as National Security Advisor (Condoleeza Rice, 2001), or as head of the CIA (Gina Haspel, 2018). A trend that seems to be amplified by the choices made by the Biden Administration under the banner of diversity that testifies to the presence of African-American and minority women in key administration roles.

However, the history of the political representation of women in the United States leaves a question open, namely, the possibility for a woman to reach certain political levels at the federal level (the state context is different) seems to have been guaranteed more by the process of distribution of political resources than from the "normal" electoral process. This is a dynamic which is also not entirely exempt from the presence of gender stereotypes as important as those found in the election campaign, in that women are considered preferable because they are considered factors of stability, of civility, of competence, being good administrators, and disinterested.

It is not right to say that this may necessarily be perceived as an evil. At the beginning of the 1900s, many American reformers were convinced that at the end of the struggle for the vote they could get by without it. The vote, they said, had not freed men, so it would not have freed women. Better to act as a lobby, to participate in decision-making processes by being part of administrative commissions in order to speak with the executive.

So, there remains a feeling that the "trauma" of Hillary Clinton's defeat has not been surpassed and that the transition from the vice presidency to the presidency is anything but natural.