

Girl Connection

For those who serve adolescent females

August 2010

Written by: Kathy Nesteby

Iowa Task Force for Young Women



August 26, 2010

August 26th, 2010: the date we celebrate the 90th Anniversary of women in the United States winning the right to vote, also known as Women's Equality Day.

Sadly, it is a day that few young people will recognize. Our young women in the juvenile justice system are no different, and perhaps it is they who would benefit most from hearing it.

Though the date itself may be less important than the stories of those who fought courageously for future generations of women to be treated as equals, it is powerful for young women to know that this victory was less than a century ago. Voting, the most basic of rights and responsibilities, was withheld from women based solely on their gender up until then. For young women in the justice system, a compelling story such as the fight for the right to vote, and the fact that it wasn't all that long ago, can offer some perspective to the personal injustices they experience.

And what a battle it was. For 72 years, women waged a non-violent campaign for their right to vote. Certainly, lessons in perseverance and taking the high road are present in this story as well. The first women's rights convention was held in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. Many of the women at that convention, those who initiated this charge toward civil rights for women, did not live to see the day the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution was passed, yet they fought bravely anyway.

As the campaign came to a close, the women were treated inexcusably. They were arrested for "obstructing sidewalk traffic" (a charge later deemed unconstitutional) because they exercised their right to peacefully and silently picket the White House. Once jailed, they were beaten, bound and abused so badly that companions believed some of the women had died. Tainted water and force feeding were used against these brave women, and yet they prevailed. Three years after the incident, the 19th Amendment was passed.

The 2004 film "Iron Jawed Angels" portrays the struggles of these potent young women.

One scene likely to resonate with young women in the juvenile justice system depicts President Woodrow Wilson and his advisors attempting to convince a psychiatrist to declare one of the women legally insane so they can force her permanent institutionalization. The psychiatrist refuses. He makes it clear that not only is she sane, she is actually brave and strong. He counsels the President and his advisors, "Courage in women is often mistaken for insanity."

How you choose to acknowledge this important event in our history to young women is up to you, but see that it gets done! Don't wait for someone else to do it. It isn't necessary that it be on the exact day of the signing of the 19th Amendment. As a matter of fact, this is an accomplishment that can and should be celebrated more than one day out of the year.

Men their rights and nothing more;
Women their rights and nothing less.
~Susan B. Anthony

**Joint Resolution of the US Congress (1971),
Designating August 26 of each year as Women's Equality Day**

WHEREAS, the women of the United States have been treated as second-class citizens and have not been entitled the full rights and privileges, public or private, legal or institutional, which are available to male citizens of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the women of the United States have united to assure that these rights and privileges are available to all citizens equally regardless of sex; and

WHEREAS, the women of the United States have designated August 26, the anniversary date of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, as symbol of the continued fight for equal rights: and

WHEREAS, the women of United States are to be commended and supported in their organizations and activities,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that August 26th of each year is designated as Women's Equality Day, and the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation annually in commemoration of that day in 1920, on which the women of America were first given the right to vote, and that day in 1970, on which a nationwide demonstration for women's rights took place.

August 26, 2010

The Girl Connection

newsletter is provided as a service of the Iowa Task Force for Young Women.

For back issues of *The Girl Connection*, more information about the Iowa Task Force for Young Women,
or if you are willing to receive future issues via e-mail to save mailing costs, please contact us:

Kathy Nesteby, Coordinator
Iowa Task Force for Young Women
(515) 281-6915
Kathy.Nesteby@iowa.gov
www.women.iowa.gov/girls

**PLEASE
COPY
AND
DISTRIBUTE
WIDELY**

Iowa Task Force for Young Women
Department of Human Rights
Lucas State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319