



## AIMS & OBJECTIVES

This lesson aims at developing an awareness about History of American Women

**Key Words:** Feme Coverture- Legal Identity- The Suffrage – Civil Rights- Equality

### Women ID in the Old World

- Mental status: small brain thus neither able to think nor able to learn
- Religious status: the reason of all men suffering and the world demise
- Social status: controlled , guided and attended for by men
- Legal status: non-existed in the eye of the law

Just like slavery, the American feme legacy had its roots back into the Old World's traditions & conventions that:

- lowered the women status (a.) intellectually, (b.) religiously, (c.) socially and (d.) legally (See.ID)
- and inflicted on them costumes which accustomed women to be obedient and submissive to men through assuming particular **domestic roles and vocational responsibilities** including:
  - attending to the needs & wishes of men,
  - getting ready for marriage,
  - producing & nursing children,
  - maintaining household,
  - and passing traditions & conventions to their daughters.

Giving to these reasons, women were socially and legally subservient to their husbands who had held responsible for their **property, person & choice** in terms of the *Coverture* through which they lost their **legal identity &** rights in owning property, inheriting property, making wills or entering a contract or sue or being sued.

A tradition that passed silently along with the waves of English female immigrants into the New World. That was initiated as early as 1619 to improve the reputation of the settlements through bringing 20 women to Jamestown for attending to the domestic needs of Virginia's bachelors. However, the Old World stereotypical image of women began to change gradually in America where the female colonists had proven themselves as capable and as rational as men during the American revolution through assuming **political & military roles** including:

- condemning tyranny & injustice,
- boycotting British goods,
- signing documents of resistance,
- helping & fighting in the battle fields,

- participating in protests,
- & assuming political roles in debating decisions.

Consequently, American women improved status via shifting their roles from vocational trainers (i.e. teaching their daughters household work ) and nursing sons into instructional educators whose main responsibility lies in raising future citizens (i.e. their sons) of America. Thanks to that, middle class women had finally an access to education and literacy in

**Antebellum America:** America in the time between the formation of the U.S. government & the outbreak of the American Civil War.

### ➡ **Antebellum America .**

Nevertheless, women neither got recognition. Nor they were accounted for in the **constitution** of America which imported the common tradition of coverture upon the women who once again became legally and socially subservient to men by marriage . In spite of the efforts of **Abigail Adams** who implored her husband, John Adams, and the other members of the Continental Congress not to forget about the nation's women sacrifices and contribution for America's independence. A quest that was declined and never granted until 1893 **Married Woman Property Act** in Mississippi.

**Abigail Adams**, American First Lady; Wife & Advisor of J. Adams; First spokeswoman of women rights in the American History,

➡ **Adams** who implored her husband, John Adams, and the other members of the Continental Congress not to forget about the nation's women sacrifices and contribution for America's independence. A quest that was declined and never granted until 1893 **Married Woman Property Act** in Mississippi.

### **Women in Antebellum America**

1. Oppressed & empowered by virtues of **piety, purity, submissiveness & domesticity.**
2. Feme Coverture.
3. Owned as property
4. Counted in census by not considered as citizens.
5. Deprived legal rights & civil rights & political rights.

### **Struggle for Rights & Equality**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> C, middle class women become more active and visible by fashioning public role through managing the ideology of domesticity- also known as "**The Cult of Domesticity**" or "**True Women Hood**" - in the American society. Where they joined and formed societies dedicated to everything from literary interests to the antislavery movement before, joining voices together to begin a long fight for freedom , equality, civil rights & political rights through:

➡ **The Cult of Domesticity:** a late 19<sup>th</sup> C American philosophy in which a woman's value was based upon her ability to stay home and perform the "duties" of a wife and mother. It was established as reaction to the work of poor women in "**the Great Depression**"

**The Suffrage movement (1869-1920):** a decades-long fight to win the right to vote for women in the United States

- 1) **the Suffrage movement** which had given all women over 21 the vote in the USA by 1920, after a long way fight with violence, political turmoil & social upheaval, through the **nineteenth amendment** to the American constitution.
- 2) **Civil rights movement** which granted women, Pay Equality ( **Equal pay act John 1963 F. Kennedy**), Work Equality ( **Civil Rights Act 1964 Lyndon B. Johnson** )& Education Equality ( **The Education Amendments 1972 Richard Nixon** ).

Those ended up eventually with shattering more glass ceilings that assumed the 20<sup>th</sup> C American woman all roles & responsibilities as those of men.

**Task:** Examine the following source carefully then write a historical source analysis using the six analysis skills on the basis of this lecture Handout.

**Source:** “[...]by the way in the new Code of Laws[...] I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands[...] If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebelion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.” *An excerpt from Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March - March 31, 1776*

**Historical Source Analysis :**

<b>(HSA) Skills</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<b>Information</b>	
<b>Origin</b>	
<b>Perspective</b>	
<b>Context</b>	
<b>Audience</b>	
<b>Motivation</b>	

### References

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