

Look at the Splendid Chromo Premium given to every
Single or Club Subscriber for the year 1874.

Herstory: a vivid documentation of the breadth and
diversity of American women's achievements throughout U.S. history.

There have been women trailblazers throughout American history; women have had a profound impact on the intellectual, social, and political development of our society. But many of their contributions have gone unnoticed. Most people have heard of Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Tubman, Margaret Sanger, and Eleanor Roosevelt. But did you know that a woman microbiologist discovered the bacterium responsible for undulant fever, which then led to the pasteurization of all milk? Or that a woman patented the paper-bag folding machine to make square-bottom bags (the grocery bag)? Or that a female mathematician's work laid the foundation for abstract algebra?

Most history passes over women. Our names and faces are missing, our stories omitted or distorted, and covered over by an endless masculine litany of kings, warlords, priests (with an occasional queen or concubine --- often a woman blamed for ruining everything). But women have exercised power and determined the course of events and the forms of human culture. Women founded, governed, invented and created. We have been leaders, prophets, scribes and authors, warriors and rebels against oppression, fighting for our rights and for our peoples.

Girls and women suffer from a lack of knowledge about societies that accord power to women in public life: in religion, medicine, the arts, diplomacy, land management and inheritance. These crucial silences and omissions create the demoralizing impression that women have always been beneath men. Which is false.

In classic Eurocentric history, women end up as footnotes to the "main" story. Sandra Cisneros said of the search for Latina heroines, "We are the footnotes of the footnotes." And yet the heritages of women of color, especially indigenous women, supply the most dramatic recent examples of societies that embraced open female power.

Even the tendency to focus on famous women or rulers is a distortion. We understand more if we expand our vision to include entire groups of creative and honored women, the inventors and clan elders, the healers, shamans, and priestesses. There is a clear interplay between these spiritual offices and political power in many indigenous societies.

Power itself has been conceived of very narrowly, as domination, force, and supremacy---top-down command, grasping and seizing goods and grinding down people, despoiling nature. These systems are more than patriarchal; they are colonial and imperial.

Looking past these blinders will give us a broader view of reality, one that takes in female spheres of power: Cultural. Foundational. Political. Social. Economic. Technological. Religious. Artistic. Medical. Scholarly. Physical. Agents of change and transformation.

To compound this absence of women in history, we live in a society where media is the most persuasive force shaping cultural norms and the collective message that our young women and men overwhelmingly receive is that a woman's value and power lie in her youth, beauty, and sexuality---not in her capacity as a leader. These messages limit children's ideas of what is possible in the world and can have damaging effects on their self-esteem, health, and the way they treat others.

While women have made great strides in leadership over the past few decades, the United States is still 90th in the world for women in national legislatures, women hold only 3% of positions of clout in mainstream media, and 65% of women and girls have disordered eating behaviors.

How do you believe the exclusion of women from history and the images of women in mainstream media contribute to the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America?

1. Please post an *initial* response to these questions of *at least* 150 words
2. Reply (2 or 3 sentences) to *at least* 3 other students' initial postings.
3. Be sure to include your 5 things you thought were interesting from the video and readings!

**If you are unsure how to use Discussion Board, click the "Tools" tab on your left to
access the User Manual.**