



Liner Notes

By Kabir Sehgal

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Next year, 2020, isn't just a presidential election year. It's the 100-year anniversary of the nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which became law on August 18, 1920, when Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to approve the measure. The amendment was effectively just one sentence: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." It took some seventy years (and arguably more) to ink this clause into law. And it had immediate and enormous effects on the electorate as some 26 million women could vote in the 1920 presidential election, which swelled to over 74 million who voted in the 2016 election. And while the enactment of this amendment was cause for celebration one hundred years ago, it also exacerbated societal fissures, as African American women and other minorities weren't able to fully participate in elections.

Throughout American history, deciding which minority group should be granted suffrage has been the subject of intense debate. To clarify a common misconception, suffrage doesn't mean "to suffer." Suffrage comes from the Latin *suffragium*, which means "vote" or the "right to vote." Although when you consider the suffering that many have endured to attain suffrage, the two words seem like synonyms and sound like homonyms. Yet what's most evident are their antonyms: intolerance, inequality, and injustice.

Women, African Americans, immigrants, and more "minority" groups have had their voting rights denied or diminished through history. And despite women being 50.8 percent of the US population, they have been treated like a subordinate group. It's worth remembering the decades-long struggle that many pursued so that more could eventually participate in the democratic process. By understanding the sacrifices of our fore-mothers and fathers, perhaps more will be awakened to the importance of voting, come next election. And work towards safeguarding this right for all.

Shoulder to Shoulder: Centennial Tribute to Women's Suffrage seeks to re-create the multi-decade debate – warts and all – that culminated in the enactment of the nineteenth amendment. "We want to highlight this significant movement in American history. One that we shouldn't forget and that is relevant today. It's also one in which music played an important role," said **Karrin Allyson**. A remarkable and multi-GRAMMY nominated artist, Allyson is also an activist who feels equally comfortable on the bandstand, as she does at the podium making the case for women's rights. In fact, she has a history of writing songs ("Big Discount", "Way Down Below") that challenge conventional political wisdom and call for societal change.

Whether provoked by the MeToo, Times Up movement, or the resulting societal zeitgeist, leaders in almost every industry and sector are reexamining their personnel and work place practices. Jazz is no exception. In the program for the 2019 Winter Jazz Fest in New York, **Brice Rosenbloom** pointed out that only 129 of the 750 performers are women: "While we have taken steps towards gender equality in programming, the next step is for bandleaders to also commit to more inclusivity in their groups," she wrote.

Allyson didn't just commit to inclusivity of gender but exceptionality of talent. Her sextet is composed of some of the best artists in jazz. Full stop. **Helen Sung** (piano), **Endea Owens** (bass), **Allison Miller** (drums) make up one of the most gifted rhythm sections today. **Ingrid**

Jensen (trumpet) and **Mindi Abair** (alto saxophone) give the band added genius and enrich the production with their strong spirit and support of women's rights.

Because of the theme's inclusive import, Allyson and the production team invited several notable guests to "lend their voices" to the debate. Adding copious artists can risk turning any project from a cohesive musical statement to a "gathering place." Alas, Allyson's powerful and profound vocals provide the through line and beginning-to-end narrative arc of the entire production. This album is very much a story. And Allyson is its storyteller, with each guest thoughtfully featured to dramatize historical episodes in the women's suffrage movement. In sum, the weft and number of artists enhances the welcoming and numerous spirit of the album.

Chronology of Courage

Most of these songs are propaganda. They were composed in the nineteenth or early twentieth century to advance or abridge women's voting rights. In fact, the "suffrage" repertoire is made up of hundreds of songs, and Allyson and the production team selected ones that typified the back-and-forth debate of the struggle. That these songs can be re-imagined speaks not only to their timeless quality but the power of music in advancing social movements. The "war" over women's rights was waged, in part, through and by music. And here these songs are made relevant again through modern jazz.

"Preamble" is curtain's up on what's to come, the dramatic retelling of the safari to suffrage. Beginning with Jensen's solitary trumpet notes, the "movement" begins with a single voice. It gathers steam, as **John Daversa**, the multi-GRAMMY award winner and Chair of Jazz and Studio Music at the University of Miami Frost School of Music who arranged this and every other piece, draws upon many of the songs that will be featured throughout the production. The track incorporates a sample of a speech delivered by **Carrie Chapman Catt**, a suffragist leader, in 1920 after the passage of the nineteenth amendment. It was fitting to include a prominent suffragist, to exhibit the historical nature of this project, as she succinctly compares and summarizes how long it took for women to gain the right to vote.

"The March of the Women" is the anthem of the women's suffrage movement. Composed by Dame **Ethel Smyth** in 1910 (with lyrics by **Cicely Hamilton**), it was sung during demonstrations, protests, and imprisonments. When activists were thrown in jail or suffered through hunger strikes, this song would ring out. It also features the lyrics that serve as the title of this production: "March, march -- many as one / Shoulder to shoulder and friend to friend." There is also another song "Shoulder to Shoulder" that is part of the suffragist repertoire written by **S. J. Tanner** (to the music of "Men of Harlech"). This rendition of the "March of the Women" features a sample of a speech given by **Susan Platt**, an activist, at the Women's March on Washington in January 2018. The juxtaposition of Catt and Platt on successive tracks reveals the centuries-long ceaseless march for progress, as if to say "The work must go on!" As for the music, Allyson radiates energy and enthusiasm, and the piece crescendos with a choir of over forty women singing a final verse and chorus. The choir is composed of the Frost Women's Chorale, as well as Karrin's mother, **Chrystopher**, her sisters and nieces, and over a dozen activists and prominent women who are proponents of women's causes. Some of these

performers and non-profit organizations include **Gloria Feldt**, Take the Lead; **Anne Devereux-Mills**, Parlay House; **Emily Bove**, Thrive Alliance; Girls Leadership; Oxfam; Latina Center; Brava! For Women in the Arts; John Muir Health; Catalyst; and the European Commission.

The “story” of this album begins with “The Great Convention,” which refers to the meeting at Seneca Falls, New York in 1848, which **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** and other notable suffragists attended. While this gathering marks the “official” start of the women’s suffrage movement, there were many brave voices who had called for respecting women in centuries past such as **Anne Hutchinson** (1591-1643), whose advocacy pre-dated the founding of the United States. The lyrics to “The Great Convention” were written in 1852, as it was cited, “by a Lady.” At the time, the call-to-convention words were provocative, perhaps why the song has an anonymous byline. The lyrics were originally set to a “German People’s Song.” But Allyson and Daversa breathe new life into this piece, by adding an unfolding melody, colorful chords, intriguing harmonization. **Madeleine Peyroux** sings the first verse with dynamism and **Denise Donatelli** takes the next one, infusing a different yet beautiful sensibility altogether. That Allyson takes the successive verse is a nod to the diversity of perspectives at Seneca Falls. Women from many religious and socioeconomic backgrounds convened in earnest to launch what became the movement. They wouldn’t live to see the fruits of what they started. The three vocalists sing the chorus together, an act of solidarity, which the suffragists would need in spades (and arguably lacked as the movement splintered among factions) over the decades to come.

“**Susan B. Anthony** (1873) performed by **Rosanne Cash**” is a snippet from a speech delivered in 1873, after she had been arrested and fined for voting in the 1872 presidential election (she never paid the fine). By the time she gave this speech, she was a well-known activist. But Anthony didn’t attend the Seneca Falls convention, and she met Stanton in May 1851 on a street corner: “There she stood, with her good, earnest face and genial smile,” she said of Stanton. The partnership between Stanton and Anthony served as the foundation on which the modern women’s suffrage movement was built. In this speech, Anthony effectively uses words to examine language itself, asking the rhetorical question of what the word “citizen” is to mean. With a hymn-like musical backdrop, Rosanne Cash delivers a rousing performance, which she recorded just weeks after writing and sharing about her #MeToo experiences in *Billboard*: “The waves of revelations wore away my own compartmentalized memories about what it’s like to be a woman in the music business... For women, it all took place on a knife’s edge between seeming to belong to the club and real danger,” she wrote.

“**I’ll Be No Submissive Wife**” was composed in 1835 by **Alexander Lee**, predating the Seneca Falls convention. Originally written as a ballad, its lyrics were strident for the antebellum years: “I’ll not be a slave for life...” Wanting to match the intensity of the lyrics, Daversa dials up the tempo with a brisk arrangement. Allyson’s vocals inhabit the piece fully, reciting the marriage verses with irony which pervades the entire song. Jensen’s defiant horn, Sung’s intensifying piano solo, and Abair’s fervently joining the *solis* are all components that make this piece part of the opening salvo of the project. The angst, disagreement, and the problem have been stated.

“**Frederick Douglass** (1888) performed by **Harry Belafonte**” is a portion of a speech delivered

by the famed abolitionist in April 1888, at the International Council of Women. He was an ardent supporter of women's suffrage, yet his involvement in the movement ultimately exposed a lamentable and even racist rift between white women and African Americans. Political leaders of both groups wanted to attain suffrage first, even if other subordinated communities had to wait. Douglass had attended the Seneca Falls convention, and was one of just thirty-two men to sign the "Declaration of Sentiments" that spelled out many grievances of women including "He has not ever permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise." In this speech delivered forty years later, Douglass takes stock of the movement, recognizing how the time for argument has ceded to that of assertion. There was no more appropriate person to read this speech than Belafonte, who recorded it in his Manhattan apartment, where framed handwritten letters of Douglass were hanging on the wall. "I was an activist before I was a singer," he said, as he grew up attending political demonstrations in Jamaica with his mother. In 2017, Belafonte served as the co-chairman of the Women's March on Washington.

The pro-and-against, back-and-forth repertoire continues with the ensuing song "Anti Suffrage Rose" which was composed by **Phil Hanna** in 1915 during the height of the movement. What today seems like veiled or obscure lyrics was anything but during the era. Suffragists, who supported the women's right to vote, identified with the color white. They wore white clothes, and one of their symbols was the white jonquil flower. During the 2018 State of the Union address, several congresswomen wore white clothes as a tribute to suffragists. Those who opposed suffragists, the anti-suffragists, wore red, and their symbolic flower was the red rose: "Jonquils they wear / cannot compare with the anti-suffrage rose." Remarkably, many men *and women* opposed the women's right to vote. Dramatizing this hard-to-believe notion, **Veronica Swift** delivers a compelling performance, beginning with evocative vocals over pizzicato strings. She scoops her voice to elicit a bluesy, soulful aesthetic. Sung's pensive piano solo gives way to Swift's pedal-to-floor scat-to-solo sung adroitly, sticking the landing on the downbeat, like a vaulting Olympic gymnast. Gold medal, here.

Humor was part of the public relations campaign employed by suffragists. They had to win over men sympathetic to their cause, and they didn't want to strike fear in them. "She's Good Enough To Be Your Baby's Mother" had lyrics composed by **Alfred Bryan** and music by **Herman Paley** in 1916, in the run up to the eventual passage of the nineteenth amendment. This version has a saloon-cum-vaudeville vibe, with Sung's stride pattern, Jensen's muted horn, and Miller's non-decaying cymbals. It begins with a scratchy, vinyl, Victrola effect before a more modern sound takes over. The song functions as a sustained and humorous musical op-ed. It also paints broadly, welcoming anyone to the cause who admired Generals **George Washington** or **Robert E. Lee**. By the time Allyson delivers the final verse, invoking (and appealing to) President **Woodrow Wilson**, the cheerful tune has enveloped everyone. We were all smiling and tapping along in the studio during the recording.

Not a laughing matter were the absurd and asinine views that many held during this period. "**Elihu Root** (1894) performed by **Peter Eldridge**" is an example of the perverse perspective purveyed by a well-known political figure (and later a statesman). Root was the Secretary of State from 1905 to 1909, during President Theodore Roosevelt's administration. He also won the

Nobel Peace Prize in 1912 for his diplomatic efforts. Yet he adamantly opposed women's suffrage, and delivered this speech in 1894 at the New York Constitutional Convention. Don't let his flowery prose obscure his views, as he said that voting "would be a loss to all women" and that suffrage for women amounts to an "injury to the state." A talented vocalist, Eldridge performs the speech with great effect, with spotless diction and commanding presence. The vamping, modal background reinforces the glacial pace of change that stymied those yearning for a more just society.

The "pro" side of the debate returns with "Columbia's Daughters," the words of which were written by **Harriet H. Robinson** in 1884 set to the music of "Hold the Fort," for a meeting of the Women's Suffrage Association of Massachusetts. The lyrics are a direct appeal to men to join the cause: "Brothers, we must share your freedom / Help us, and we will." Allyson's voice is in full bloom, as she exquisitely renders each phrase with poignancy and emotional affect. The strings and **Kait Dunton's** organ provide additional ballast. The outgoing trading and group solo of Abair, Jensen, and Allyson are moments of joy – playing the blues can get rid of them, too.

"**Sojourner Truth** (1851) performed by **Lalah Hathaway**" spotlights one of the great oversights and misgivings of the women's suffrage movement. It was largely about the societal advancement for *white* women. "While middle-class white women celebrated with ticker tape parades, black women in the former Confederacy were being defrauded by voting registrars...under the threat of violence," writes **Brent Staples** in *The New York Times* in February 2019. The centennial tribute of the nineteenth amendment shouldn't whitewash the racist views of many of the suffragist leaders. In fact, Stanton sometimes used derogatory terms for African Americans. Sojourner Truth was a women's rights activist and abolitionist who escaped slavery. She delivered this speech extemporaneously in 1851 at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention. Her mantra: "Ain't I A Woman?" was a rhetorical barb meant to illustrate the hypocrisy of those who support women's rights. (The famous line may also have been misremembered or different from what she actually said, since she likely didn't have a southern twang, having been born in New York). Let's hope that Truth's speech is a gateway for more to discover the advocacy of black suffragists such as **Frances Ellen Wakins Harper**, **Mary Ann Shadd Cary**, and others. Bringing this speech to life, Hathaway channels the spirit of Truth to the foreground. Hathaway's mesmerizing performance is indeed one of the highlights of the entire production.

"**The Promised Land**" is a natural follow-up to Truth's speech. With lyrics by **Elizabeth Bonyton Harbet**, set to the gospel music of "Beulah Land," this tune was published in literature distributed at the National-American Women's Suffrage Convention of 1891. For starters, the title of the song is a Biblical allusion to the destination and eventual home of the chosen people – the Israelites – who were slaves under the Pharaoh in Egypt. "As breaketh every bond and chain" functions as a reference to African slaves living in America, which was no promised land in the nineteenth century. Despite the harrowing subject matter, this tune is hopeful, a clarion call that urges "The onward march in truth's crusade." (That's truth not Truth. But with a historical lens both common and proper nouns represent the same compelling idea!). Daversa composed a four-part cappella harmony introduction that features Allyson, **Antonia Bennett**, **Emily Estefan**,

and **Kate Reid**. Hard not to call attention to Antonia's and Emily's famous parents, and this new generation is "assuming the torch" to illuminate the path towards the promised land, one in which we respect and treat each other with dignity. **Pauline Jean** is featured on the main section of the tune, in a duet with Allyson. Both artists magnificently convey the power and potentiality of what can be. Performing cello on the track is **Olivia Culpo**, a former Miss USA and Miss Universe who is an activist and supporter of women's rights.

"Winning the Vote" is the culmination of the suffrage repertoire. **A.B. Smith** wrote the lyrics in 1888. Daversa's arrangement is a duet that features **Kurt Elling** and Allyson. This song is a microcosm of the entire album, because it dramatizes and summarizes the suffrage debate, moving Elling from someone opposed to women's voting rights to a *suffragent*, a colloquial term used during the era to describe men who were supporters of the cause. The about-face comes when the man realizes that women also have to pay taxes, which is another reminder of how many things (sometimes even social issues!) come down to money. The swelling strings serve as an exclamation to the newly founded perspective of progress.

"**Alice Paul** (1921) performed by **Julie Swidler**" is commentary that Paul wrote in *Suffragist*, the periodical of the National Woman's Party in 1921, after the enactment of the nineteenth amendment. She adeptly recaps the movement, harkening back to the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. Yet she urges women not to become complacent because full equality is not at hand. Women still faced the scourge of discrimination at universities, in the work place, and even within their own families. Swidler brings this passage home with her enlivened performance. As an Executive Vice President & General Counsel at Sony, Swidler presence is a stark reminder of the work remaining to achieve gender equality in the recording industry. There are indeed pay gaps between genders, and the executive ranks are filled by many more men. The march for progress must go on!

"Way Down Below" is the first of two original pieces by Allyson. It was essential to feature contemporaneous music to showcase the relevancy of the movement and germane nature of this project. Inequality and injustice aren't found in museums. They are part of the here and now. One of Allyson's musical heroes is **Roberta Flack** who recorded a few lines to be sampled in the piece: "When you educate a woman, you do the world a favor," she opens, with her cat purring. She also ends the piece with the uplifting and unifying line "All rise above." Allyson's sings her direct lyrics without compunction: "It just ain't right to pit a sister against a sister," taking on the "sororicide" of the historical suffrage movement. Owens' thick bass groove evolves into a head-nodding solo. **Regina Carter** is featured on violin, adding a bluesy and soulful timbre to the tune. She bends and bows those twangy minor notes throughout the piece.

"Big Discount" refers to the wage disparities between genders. As Allyson makes it clear, women have historically been underpaid for work, some seventy-seven cents to the dollar. The song is that of satire, advancing and then ultimately rejecting the reasons for discrimination against women. With a passing reference to the glass ceiling left intact by the 2016 elections, she explicitly mentions the Me Too and March for Our Lives movements. Abair's downhome saxophone riffs provide color and hue to the breaks between lyrics. Allyson is undeterred in her

aspirations: “Enough already with this double standard.” Taking the torch is **Rapsody**, an acclaimed rapper and activist who contributes well-paced verses that amplify the overall message of the track and album. Big Discount is indeed a big reminder of the many issues that still inhibit us from achieving true equality among genders.

The March Ahead

Since its founding, America has been one long debate. That citizens can band together around ideas and ideologies is a recipe both for incredible success yet also danger. The first amendment to the Constitution which protects freedom of speech was absolute in its guarantee. Such unbridled freedom permitted some to advance views that curtailed the liberty of others. Yet for more than two centuries, from the town square to the Twittersphere, Americans have opined on how to make their union more perfect. Our society has been less than so, holding back the one right that is the ultimate freedom of speech – voting.

Here we are on the anniversary of an important milestone. To commemorate 2020, a “Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission” is helping to organize a raft of events and activities. There will be parades, celebrations, and plenty of retrospectives. While Americans take stock of the distance we have traveled, let’s also look ahead to that which still needs improvement. Such is the challenge of our times, to make sure that everyone can join the chorus for freedom, liberty, and dignity for all. Of course, it’s always a tall task to get everybody on the same page and crooning mostly in tune. With perseverance and persistence, progress will surely come one note at a time.

--Kabir Sehgal
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