HIGH SCHOOL FIRST RUNNER UP 2020

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"Everything the Cause had accomplished — every state won, every piece of legislation, every change of heart and shift in policy — was once considered utterly impossible. Until it wasn't."

Elaine Weiss is a contemporary author raising awareness on the history and importance of votes for women in the 21st century. She utilizes her "literary powers" to write impactful lines such as the one above to reach the American public on issues of voting rights. Passed by joint resolution, the Woman's Suffrage Amendment was approved by Congress and sent to the states for ratification on June 4th, 1919. August 18 of this year will mark exactly one century since the 19th Amendment was at last added to the Constitution; however, women's suffrage is far from over and celebrating our valiant women of the vote today is now as important as ever.

Corrupt politicians are still trying to pass restrictions to make voting harder for certain individuals. In the wake of Time's Up and #Metoo, and despite urgent calls for attention on the differing treatment of women highlighted by our country's continued gender pay gap, a growing number of citizens are still failing to cast a vote when it comes time to elect new office holders, both local and federal.

Ms. Weiss, with her fiery determination, recently published *The Woman's Hour*, an intimate novel portraying stories of women who worked towards the fight for the 19th Amendment's ratification. Staying true to history, Ms. Weiss captures the length of time it took for the women's movement to gather momentum, the unvarnished criticism, including harsh opposition — even from other women — until finally gaining sufficient strength to make a significant impact upon our American culture. **Her work is sweeping the nation, reminding readers not only of the privilege in being able to vote, but also of the responsibility each United States citizen has regardless of socioeconomic and gender affiliation to ensure that the right to vote is upheld fairly and equally for all. She refuses to let people forget the 70 years of strenuous activism for equality, forget the past United States in which a married woman could not have custodial rights to her children let alone own property, or forget the women thrown in jail with hopes that future women might gain one step closer to equality.**

But not only does she refuse to let people forget, she also invites curiosity. An online radio talk featuring Ms. Weiss inspired me to research Alice Paul and the Silent Sentinels, American female icons and movements I would have never known otherwise. She may not have been alive to fight for the actual passing of the 19th Amendment, but in raising awareness on the original suffrage movement through her platform as a writer during a time when most no longer care, she plays an extremely valuable role for modern readers like me. Female authors like Elaine Weiss are relevant and should be celebrated for illuminating our suffragette shadows that still survive today.