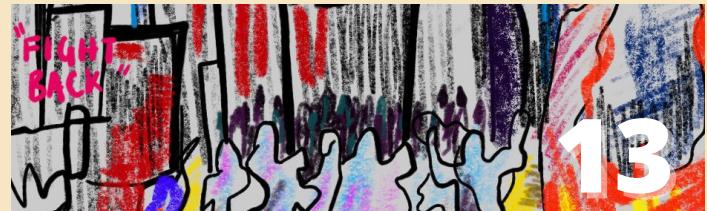


# VERITY TODAY

NOVEMBER- 2021

THE  
RESISTANCE  
ISSUE





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# Editor's note —

As the seasons change from summer sun to winter snow, nighttime creeps on us earlier each day. Under the cover of darkness emerges the masses of the rebellion, set to dismantle mainstream life in favour of a new order. The very concept of resistance connotes a community-based and grassroots experience which stands opposed to a more bourgeoisie concentration of power in the hands of a minority. As students who have embraced each other in such a community, Verity Today is proud to present its November Issue themed on "Resistance".

This, however, need not be so dramatic and grandiose. There are certainly very vital socio-political dimensions to the idea of resistance, but these are not all-encompassing. To me, resistance may be the ambition of a marginalized group to stand up to an oppressive government, but it is also the mere tenacity to wear nail polish as a man in a heteronormative society. Resistance is the determination to take care of oneself before prioritizing the desires of others. Resistance is the willpower to get out of bed every morning and go about one's day when faced with the dreaded monotony of a life in lockdown. Resistance is our continued survival in a world stalked by a deadly virus. Resistance is within each and every one of us, bubbling under and waiting to burst forth.

Through its November Issue, Verity Today traces this trajectory of the act of resistance, from personal to global, quotidian to historical, and micro to macro. As 2021 begins to approach its end, it is time to recognize that the year has been challenging for most, be it physically, emotionally, or mentally. For me, at least, that has definitely been the case; if it is of any comfort, your resolution to stick things out and take care of yourself is an act of resistance. It is my greatest wish that our newsletter will serve to be a source of hope for you, our readers. Put on the new Taylor Swift album, snuggle up in a warm blanket with a hot cup of cocoa, and let us welcome you into a microcosm of revolution, rebellion, and resistance.

*Mohan Rajagopal  
Senior Editor  
Verity Today*



# Thank You, but That Wasn't Helpful.

Written by: Vaishali Sarah Mundle

Edited by: Ananya Singh

Change can be scary.

Change can be amazing.

Change can be necessary, even if devastating.

It's not the same experience for everyone.

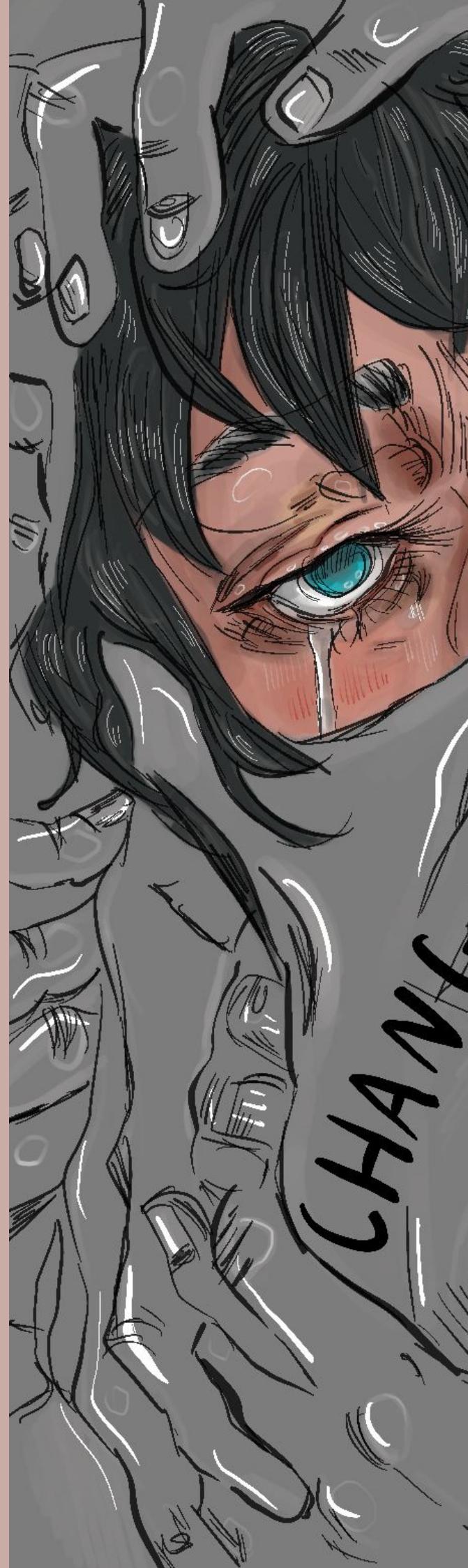
While someone may be experiencing cold feet prior to a change, someone can be beyond thrilled about it. It's not all black and white though. Someone may have mixed feelings. Some, though, resist change.

Resistance to change, the reluctance to adapt to new or changed situations is something most of us can relate to. At least at the moment, in the middle of a pandemic, right?

Who would've imagined, having to have our usual hangout sessions virtually? Not being able to travel, not being able to get basic tasks done because of the looming threat of a deadly virus, which even if not taken seriously by the majority, is still existent. Perhaps not taking the virus seriously is one of the signs of resistance to this change.

So, why do we resist change?

Most of us follow a certain lifestyle. Imagine being forced to completely or even partially change that owing to certain unavoidable circumstances. It's uncertain, alien and a little nerve-wracking. Of course, there is always a set of people looking forward to that kind of change but that does not take away the uncertainty factor. Just changes the way people look at it. Feeling that lack of control and fear of how the change may have impacted your future is something we would rather steer clear from but something or the other will always change, or in other words, change is the only constant, as proven in the sitcom, "The Big Bang Theory", where Sheldon Cooper's resistance to change throughout the series finally comes to an end in the second last episode- "The Change Constant".





Another reference of this sort of resistance in pop culture is in quite a popular song called “I Can’t Handle Change” by R.O.A.R. Mostly heard all over Tik Tok and Instagram, it’s a song all about, as the name suggests, not being able to handle change.

*“Hangin’ out where I don’t belong is nothing new to me*

*I get tired and I get sick and then I lose the strength to leave*

*I can’t handle change*

*I can’t handle change”*

These are a few lines from the song which vividly depicts the impact of change on mental health which leads to people resisting it as a whole.

Moving cities, changing schools, parents getting a divorce, losing a loved one, are a few of the many changes an adolescent or child goes through. Adults go through similar changes but instead of an academic environment it’s the work environment and the common thing in all of these is the feeling of distress and not wanting to experience that change again.

All this can make one anxious as they view it negatively even if there’s a good outcome. It can lead to depression in extreme cases which can make things all the more difficult for the person. Restlessness, insomnia and overthinking, also leads to physical exhaustion in the process of trying to resist the change. It can be a very low point in someone’s life which can either get better gradually or change someone’s life adversely.

It all comes back to this: no one knows what happens in the future and again, there’s uncertainty but, imagine life without any change.

Think about it.

Perhaps, it’s for our benefit that change is the only constant.

# Resistance against inequality or Resistance for inequality

Written by: Karen Kaur

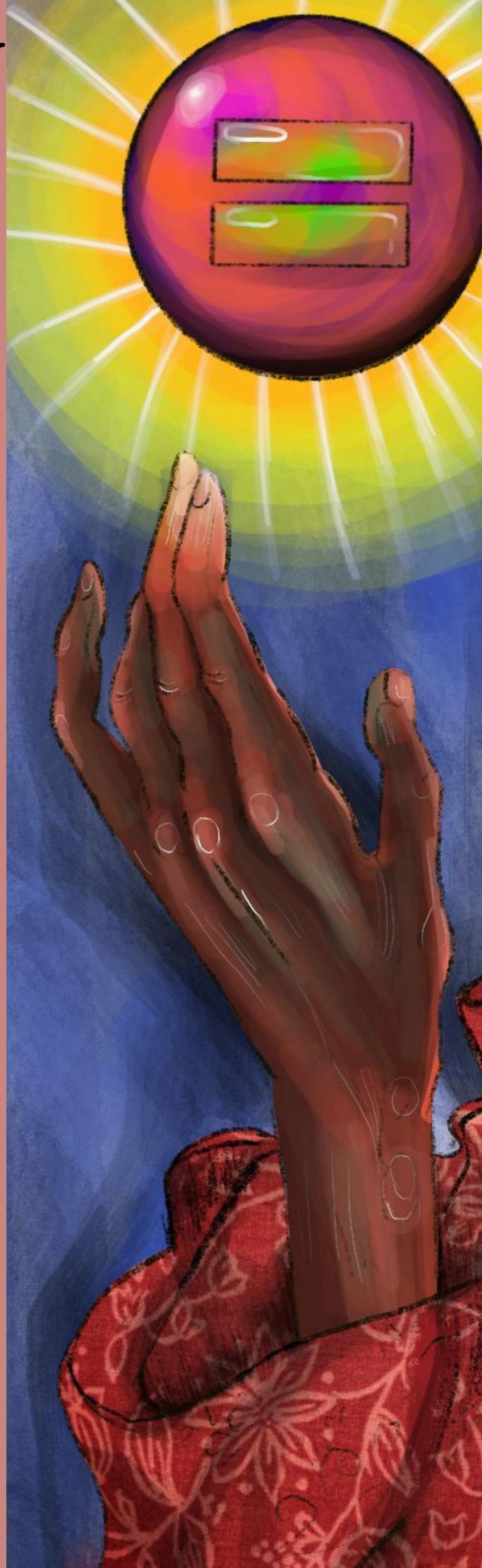
Edited by: Ananya Singh

In the era of neoliberalism and cancel culture, progressive values are now an influential branding tool. But does that mean that social-media posts have taken over as substitutes for genuine change-making? As a part of the Gen-Z, I believe that it has. In our generation, activism has more likely become 'trendivism', and that is very different from social-media advocacy.

'Trendivism' is something we're all accustomed to: social media users post about a trending headline- say a few plagiarised words on racism highlighting woke terms, other people follow suit facing the same pressure. And then, social media pages make infographics on the statistics of racist behaviour and self-declared experts make eye-catching videos. All of us reshare these posts until the next bad thing happens and the cycle repeats. Creating a colossal echo chamber online, requiring no real individual thought or substantial action at all.

Trendivism has made social injustice into hashtags and the real people who suffer have become trauma porn for the internet. While sharing videos and pictures of people experiencing discrimination serves as a way to seek justice, but mere sharing without taking any action is like showing evidence without actually doing something for the change. It is performative and not real activism.

As social media becomes a place for awareness and advocacy, we often forget that no activism is activism unless it's inclusive and intersectional. But is our activism even accessible? Instead of making posts against ableism, why don't we start taking conscious effort? Such as providing text alternatives for informational images, making all videos closed captioned, using descriptive audio, using enough strong contrast in colour choices, not embedding text in images, etc.





The ableist nature of advocacy is not only limited to the online platform. In spaces of social justice, ableism is rarely a subject of discussion. Events, protests, etc are hosted in places that alienate people with disabilities on a wide range. It isn't a community event if it is ignoring an integral part of the community.

Frequently people of non-academic backgrounds are labelled oppressive and ignorant because they fail to correctly use words like heteronormative, transmisogyny, and cis patriarchy, this shows how we barely acknowledge those who are cognitively disabled and prioritize academic terms more than solidarity.

We also partake in making an oppressive society when we fail to recognise disabilities that are not accompanied by an external signifier. People who fight with such diagnoses have crucial reasons why they might need to, say, use the public transit handicap seat or the handicap restroom. They might have to skip that revolutionary event that is planned, etc. It is an act of intrusive gate-keeping to put them in the psychological and social position of having to defend themselves. There are no safe places for those who have mobility issues, in protests, there are no wheelchairs for people with mobility issues or volunteers to push them and even if they are, they are often put in the back.

Even if you think about phrases that protests or resistance against injustice is usually centered around, you will notice a problem

“Take A Stand.”

“Join The March.”

“Step up.”

It is time we start seeing people as people and not hot button issues that can help us go viral or show that we are "woke". It is time we start treating people with dignity, and not because respect is the new cool.

# Drag Queens and the Subculture of Resistance

Written by: Mohan Rajagopal

Edited by: Anwesh Banerjee

The dismissal and patronisation of femininity have led to the isolation of non-cis-gendered, heterosexual men from the avenue of politics and social activism. In opposition to this exclusion has arisen the figure of the drag queen: kitschy, campy, and full-of-life. For the uninitiated:

“A drag queen is a person, usually male, who uses drag clothing and makeup to imitate and often exaggerate female gender signifiers and gender roles for entertainment purposes. In modern times, drag queens are associated with gay men and gay culture, but they can be of any gender and sexual identity.”

Drag is an activity that finds its basis in both self-expression as well as performance and entertainment, but in conjunction with these facets, the very emergence of this subculture is rooted in acts of political rebellion. Marsha P Johnson, one of the most prominent figures of the seminal 1969 Stonewall Riots, was a self-identified drag queen. While drag itself developed from the vaudeville (a theatrical genre of comedy) of the 1900s, the politicisation of the art form began roughly around the 70s with the Cockettes, a queer performance troupe from San Francisco. These performers would satirise political and national events, giving way to another group in the 80s: the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. Often holding public protests in California, the Sisters are most famous for hosting the first-known HIV fundraiser. This was an especially loaded move- the HIV epidemic was demonised as a “gay disease”, adding fuel to the already raging fire of homophobia and hate crimes. Ronald Reagan, then President of the United States, was often found laughing off the epidemic as the majority of the heterosexual population were considered safe from the epidemic. The Sisters’ public support of HIV sufferers was hence a direct refusal to comply with the administration’s propaganda. Drag queens have always been at the forefront of political resistance.



Nearly four decades later, the politicisation of drag has continued in full swing. In a conversation about drag, RuPaul's Drag Race cannot be ignored, being the most avid proponent of drag culture in popular media. Both the host, RuPaul Charles, and the producers of the show have been extremely vocal about politics, weaving it into the fabric of the show as well. The 8th and 12th seasons of the show aired in 2016 and 2020 respectively, election years for the United States. Each episode in these seasons ended with a message encouraging viewers to register for voting. One of the main challenges in each season even included a "Presidential debate" among the competing drag queens. In 2020, Jackie Huba founded Drag Out The Vote, a non-profit organisation aimed at establishing drag queens and LGBTQ+ individuals as ambassadors to increase voter turnouts for the upcoming elections. Apart from these explicitly political statements, more mundane yet poignant discussions on the show about conversion therapy, hate crimes, and day-to-day homophobia help root drag within a fundamentally political sphere.

Yes, drag is ridiculous and over-the-top, but this does not mitigate its seriousness and power in any way. Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, executive producers of RuPaul's Drag Race, have stated:

"As playful and as fun as drag can and will always be, it can also be serious fun, by playing with society's norms in a very profound way. And drag only becomes more pointedly political in an environment where an illegitimate regime seeks — picking just one example — to impose reductive and cruel ideas about gender that fly in the face of gender's proven complexity."





by ambika bose

These aforementioned examples of resistance through drag are practical applications embodied through the very concept of drag. In modernity, politics and society are dominated by the patriarchal male figure abounding in toxic masculinity and chauvinism. The institutions that we exist in are defined according to the provisions and privileges of cis-gendered, heterosexual men; drag queens, on the other hand, are the embodiment of its antithesis. Since it is mostly men dressing up as women, drag embraces a more feminine perspective of the world, in strict contrast to traditional hyper-masculinity. Furthermore, blurring the lines between the binaries and boundaries established in society is the greatest resistance of them all.

Drag dismantles the foundations on which our man-made lives have been built, reconstructing them on more equitable and accepting lines. It is this act of deconstruction and questioning that establishes drag as an inherently political art form, and the rest of us would do well to learn from its fluidity and non-conformity. After all, as Lady Gaga once sang, “Don’t be a drag, just be a queen”.

# Explaining society's reluctance to accept the COVID-19 vaccine

Written by: Reevu Majumdar  
Edited by: Mohan Rajagopal

COVID-19 has swept the world ever since its first appearance, forcing us into global quarantine and changing the trajectory of the lives of most forever. In desperate attempts to escape the quarantine that has tied people down within their homes, many have been hoping for the release of a vaccine to return us all to "normal". Plenty of viable options for vaccines have been made, notably Pfizer's, Covaxin, Johnson and Johnson, Covishield, and more. However, as these vaccines provide a temporary solution to the worldwide issue of the pandemic, the population that refuses to get any such vaccines seems to grow by the day, further lengthening the period of time that we are forced to remain in isolation. While their scepticism may be harmful towards other people suffering due to the pandemic, they use thorough scientific reasoning and evidence from famous doctors to back up their claims. These vaccines are arguably the solution to the problem we have been facing the last two years; yet, a sizable minority of the world still chooses to deny it. Political and psychological aspects aside, we can infer that this is largely due to any sort of scientific evidence they can use to support their claims. Certain vaccines would face halts in production and distribution due to a wide number of absurd results in patients receiving the vaccine.

Firstly, the Johnson and Johnson vaccine was a stable option at the time for people who needed to travel around and required a vaccine as quickly as possible. Upon a thorough investigation of the vaccine, however, the presence of numerous rare blood clots was discovered in people who have received it, particularly adult women under the age of 50. After careful review, the vaccine halted production and distribution around the time of April this year but was later approved by the FDA and CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) to resume the administration of the vaccine. The situation itself, however, seemed particularly dangerous and resulted in one of the first vaccine scares.

The J&J vaccine caused global paranoia amongst people who were already very sceptical about COVID-19 vaccines in the first place. While considered to be safe, women under the age of 50 taking the vaccine need to be aware of the adverse effects, and for three weeks after getting the vaccine, possible symptoms of a blood clot with low platelets called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome, or TTS, may appear.

Similarly, many have observed such rare conditions resulting from other vaccines as well. A prime example is the infamous Pfizer vaccine and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, due to which rare occurrences of myocarditis began to appear, following its second injection. Myocarditis is an inflammation of the heart muscle (myocardium). The inflammation can reduce the heart's ability to pump, weakening it and leading to heart failure, abnormal heartbeat and sudden death. These conditions are treatable if treated at the right time, but could prove to be fatal over time. Another cause for this widespread scepticism and refusal to accept the vaccine sparks from fear of the various side effects, ranging from fever, muscle aches, chills, fatigue, headaches to a combination of these symptoms.

Michael Yeadon is a former vice president of Pfizer, where he spent 16 years as an allergy and respiratory researcher. He later co-founded a biotech firm that the Swiss drugmaker Novartis purchased for at least \$325 million. As of recent times, he has emerged as a public icon, representative of the “anti-vax” community. The reluctance and grand movement to refuse vaccines has amplified his sceptical views on the vaccine and lockdowns.

Michael Yeadon said that he personally doesn't oppose the use of all vaccines. But many health experts and government officials worry that opinions like his, which question the validity and safety of the vital vaccines, can potentially fuel vaccine hesitancy – a reluctance or refusal to be vaccinated – that could prolong the pandemic.

In fact, he was one of the few that had signed the petition to halt the distribution of vaccines as it made women infertile, despite test results stating that only 13% of the women who received the vaccine were infertile.

From a scientific perspective, recent reports of blood clots and abnormal bleeding in a small number of recipients of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine have cast doubt on that shot's safety, leading several European countries to suspend its use. These developments are likely to fuel vaccine hesitancy further, although there is no evidence of a causative link between the AstraZeneca product and the affected patients' conditions.

It is essentially this credibility that evokes fear in citizens across the world, wondering if they are truly free of any health concerns that could potentially lead to lifelong torment. Luckily, safety is considered a top priority in the manufacturing of such vaccines. Trials for the vaccines have had fully independent safety monitoring boards, and safety data are continuously reviewed by the FDA and expert panels. The number of serious problems in test participants was very low, and there was little difference between those who received the actual vaccine and those who received a placebo. Millions of people have received the vaccines since their authorization, and careful safety monitoring of all three COVID-19 vaccines continues.



# Struggle For Suffrage

Written by: Anikait Chakraborty  
Edited by: Pradyumn Nahata

Seneca Falls, New York, witnessed the first national gathering for women's rights on 19th July, 1848. Led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Quaker abolitionist Lucretia Mott, the convention aimed for creating an immediate strategy to fight for the social, religious and economic rights for women. Eleven resolutions were discussed over a span of just two days and all of them broached the inequality faced by women in various spheres of life. All Americans were encouraged to disregard any law that proposed women to be inferior to men and the convention resolved for the accessibility of equal rights for women. The Seneca Falls Convention reassembled two weeks later, on August 2, 1848, at the First Unitarian Church in Rochester, New York, to reiterate the movement's ideals in front of a wider audience. The convention's leaders continued to battle for women's rights at state and national events in the years afterward. When campaigning for women's rights, reformers commonly alluded to the Declaration of Sentiments.

The 19th Amendment was a significant step forward for voting rights and growth in America. Amendment stipulated that "the right of citizens to vote shall not be denied or restricted on account of sex by the United States or by any State." The amendment was first offered in Congress in 1878, but it did not receive enough bipartisan support to pass both the House of Representatives and the Senate until 1919. Then it had to be confirmed by three-fourths of the states' legislatures. By March 1920, 35 states had adopted the amendment. Tennessee passed the amendment in August, allowing women to vote in the 1920 presidential election.





However, the women's suffrage movement, which campaigned for its ratification, was torn apart over the issue of Black suffrage, which harmed the amendment's influence and legacy. Persistent and widespread racism infiltrated the suffrage movement during the discussion, culminating in an amendment that largely secured the vote for middle-class white women while offering women of colour, particularly Black women, little more than a hollow promise. Despite the amendment's passing, many women of colour were still prevented from voting due to widespread intimidation and voter suppression. It was the Voting Rights Act of 1965, not the 14th, 15th, or 19th Amendments that ultimately eliminated structural impediments to voting for Black Americans.

The trajectory in India was slightly different. In 1918, limited suffrage to women possessing property had been introduced by the Colonial Officers. And it wasn't until the late 1920s, that all women finally got their due. Universal Adult Suffrage, however, stepped in only after the constitution had been drafted post-Independence. This feature of the Indian Constitution was the only one that was ratified instantly and passed undisputed. Women's demand for equal and egalitarian treatment in the political sphere emerges as an intrinsic aspect of feminism's history. The primary goal of the early suffragists was not to gain voting rights; rather, they saw suffrage as an opportunity to participate more actively in society's political matters through political involvement and intervention. Women learned the ultimate prospectives of democracy through the years of hard effort they put in to make suffrage a reality.