

Dear Sylvanie Williams,

This last century has been one long war. Warriors crying for change, troops marching into battle, the globe rumbling from every step, every voice. Still, we are advancing. We have continued fighting, even when the foot of inequality sought to squash us down, to pull us from our roots. The passage of the 19th Amendment was a spark that ignited the flame of civil rights activism in America. However, these days I find myself asking: Is that fire dying out? Have we stopped and settled just because our initial battles were won? Is this home of the brave really the land of the free? The United States has undergone a lot of change since 1920, and I think you would find the nation farther on than you would have expected. But today, even though we have been presented with a new assortment of problems, I believe we have the capability to do so much more.

After women were granted suffrage, social movements began to bloom across the nation. People refused to have their rights denied any longer. Protesting proved to be an effective solution to the inequality still residing in society. In the late 1940s, the Civil Rights Movement took flight. It involved multiple sit-ins, nonviolent protests, and boycotts all with the mission of protecting the rights of every American, regardless of gender, origin, and most notably, race. I believe the achievement of this mission was restrained for far too long. The 14th and 15th amendments for equal citizenship and voting rights had been ratified almost 70 years ago, yet many people still faced discrimination. The issue was not the lack of laws and regulation. It was the slow implementation of those laws that pushed us behind. That chained us down when we could have been free to enjoy liberty. The good thing, however, about oppression is that it highlights the weaknesses in a country and reveals to the people the things that need to be altered if freedom is to be achieved. Without a battle we would have no war. We would all remain ignorant to the problems happening around us. Thankfully, many things have occurred to develop the nation's perspectives. 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* ends racial segregation in public schools. 1964, The Civil Rights Act is signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, prohibiting discrimination by race, gender, or origin in employment. 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act is signed, prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities. Whether it was for a specific race, gender, social class, nationality, marriage, or way of thinking, people have refused to let their rights be infringed upon. Unfortunately, there were many setbacks along the way. Assassinations attempted to silence voices, courts didn't always rule in our favor, and legislation tried to bind us instead of facilitating freedom.

I believe that you, Mrs. Williams, would believe that with all these accomplishments, all these feathers in our caps, the nation has surpassed your expectations. A lot has changed since the 1920s. However, I think that with the amount of communication, technology, and ideology that have become available over the years, we shouldn't still be fighting the same battles. We should be much farther on. Messages and ideas can be spread so much faster and to a wider audience, yet women are still not always welcome in the workplace, African Americans still face discrimination, and many people are still denied the right to choose. I am not saying that I am not proud of the progress we've made, but it's disappointing that the adversity that we have already overcome is still allowed to exist. We can't tolerate regression, not after all the progress we've made. The greatest defeat is when we become stationary. Silence and stillness are the

breeding grounds for oppression, while battles can birth greatness and change. If we want to protect the rights that activists like you have established, then we have to make America advance. No more waiting around when there are so many other rights to protect, futures to inspire, and wars to be won.

Sincerely,

A Young Flower of America

Amara Nwabueze