

To Sylvanie Williams,

Greetings from the future! I bring news about the state of women's rights since the time you were on your crusade for equality. I am a fourteen-year-old Black girl in March, 2023. It has been 100 years since courageous women like you had to fight for their right to vote. You will be happy to know that we have made great accomplishments in the 21st century, such as lifting the ban on women in combat, equal opportunities for education, and equal employment opportunities. These accomplishments have enabled women to have the same opportunities as men. I hope that you will be honored to know that you play a role in these improvements in women's lives. At your time, women protested, exercised civil disobedience, and spoke to the masses in order to finally obtain the rights they deserved.

...And yet, we are still campaigning for our voices to be heard. Women continue to protest, lobby, and rally for changes to be made. Every day, women face pressure from society. These pressures include (but are not limited to) stereotypes, weight and fatphobia, modesty, and lack of respect. Along with day-to-day pressure from society, women have a very real fear that their safety will be threatened. The fear of walking alone or just being in the presence of men comes from the abysmally high rates of women being sexually assaulted or harassed, victims of gender-based violence, and sexual and human trafficking victims. Studies have shown that one in three women experiences sexual violence in their lifetime. Living safely is a basic human right that is threatened for women simply living. Women must fight for their birth rights—safety and freedom to express themselves the way they want without their safety on the line—because society restricts their rights. Women continue to persevere in the quest you started to end discrimination and violent acts committed against them, to create greater gender equality, and to maintain control over their own bodies.

This struggle over women's control over their bodies has intensified in the last eight months. In June 2022, five out of the nine Supreme Court Justices voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, an amendment ratified in January 1973 legalizing abortion. The act of *Roe v. Wade* being overturned displayed that conservative justices have power over what women could do with their bodies. Too many misogynistic, narrow-minded people believe that women should bear their children, become mothers, and care for their families. While this life may be desirable for some women, not all women have the yen to bear children and become mothers. Women with pregnancies resulting from rape or whose bodies cannot bear a child safely cannot get abortions in some states, although they may need them to stay safe, whether that be emotionally or physically. This is not the first time that (mostly) men have changed or ignored laws at the expense of women's equality. Many companies violate the Equal-Pay Act. Women earn 78 cents for every dollar earned by men. Furthermore, Black women earn only 64 cents, and Latinas merely 54 cents. Even though women's rights have been "protected," they are still, nevertheless, violated by some men in charge.

Although we females actively pursue the ultimate goal of our voices to be heard, there have been great advances in protecting our rights. Since we have earned the right to vote, the government has protected our right not to be discriminated against in the hiring process, pregnant women not being fired, and female employees being able to speak out against unsafe working conditions. Even though all these advances are the bare minimum, we take our wins

where we can. We are working toward true equal wages, the safety of women being equal to that of men, lowering (if not eliminating) discrimination by some men in misogynistic ways, and to be respected in society's eyes.

Society has come a long way since women's suffrage was added to the Constitution via the 19th Amendment. Furthermore, society has a way to come before we can finally reach gender equality. Women have faced unfair opportunities, violence, and lack of respect. In your words: through "being trampled like flowers underfoot," we are still advancing. We will keep the fire and passion of the fight for women's rights. It shall be an honor to pass this torch to the next generation. And maybe I will have the honor of receiving a letter upon my demise starting with, "Greetings from the future..."

Determined,

A fourteen-year-old Black girl.

Mia Scott