



TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD
Mayor Marcia A. Leclerc

2018 - OpEd

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March is Women's History Month

By Mayor Marcia A. Leclerc

Last week I had the pleasure of reading Dr. Seuss to a group of kindergarten students for Read Across America Day. But I wish I had read my favorite children's book, *She Persisted*, by Chelsea Clinton. The book details the struggles and triumphs of perseverance of Harriet Tubman, Helen Keller, Clara Lemlich, Nellie Bly, Virginia Apgar, Maria Tallchief, Claudette Colvin, Ruby Bridges, Margaret Chase Smith, Sally Ride, Florence Griffith Joyner, Oprah Winfrey and Sonia Sotomayor. The last line reads "if anyone ever tells you no, if anyone ever says your voice isn't important or your dreams are too big, remember these women. They persisted and so should you."

In 2018, that message of persistence, empowerment and equality is more important than ever to instill in our youth. The past year saw the rise of the Me Too and Time's Up Movements that don't just affect Hollywood, Wall Street, or Washington, but have impacts here in Connecticut as well. Our town and our state have much to be proud of, but there is still more to go. Ella Grasso was the first woman in the nation to be elected Governor in her own right, and on our Town Council, 5 of the 9 seats are held by women. However, women still hold fewer than 30% of the state legislature.

According to the National Archives, Women's History Month had its origins as a national celebration in 1981 when Congress authorized and requested the President to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982 as "Women's History Week." In 1987 after being petitioned by the National Women's History Project, Congress designated the entire month of March 1987 as "Women's History Month." Between 1988 and 1994, Congress passed additional resolutions requesting and authorizing the President to proclaim March of each year as Women's History Month, and since 1995, Presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama have issued a series of annual proclamations designating March as such.

The designation of March as Women's History Month coincides with International Women's Day, celebrated each year on March 8th. International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. International Women's Day has occurred for well over a century, with the first gathering supported by over a million people in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. Today, the celebration is not country, group or organization specific.

Every day, thousands of cracks continue to be made in the glass ceiling, and I am proud to do my part as Mayor to represent all that our society has achieved, and to carry the torch further as we strive to make our world a better place for our daughters, granddaughters, and our community as a whole. My hope is that one day we will achieve full gender parity in representation across all sectors, be they political, corporate or otherwise, and eventually to see a woman in the Oval Office. This March, as you should every day of the year, I urge you to do your part to recognize the strong women in life who have helped you get to where you are, and ask how you can help them in turn.

Mayor Marcia A. Leclerc

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