Making A Difference Essay, Research Paper

Making a Difference

For centuries, women have been seen as inferior individuals. Women of every

generation have been trying to change that image. They have been fighting for the right to

lead their own lives, to not be controlled by anyone, to be able to make their own

decisions, and to be free. The Taming of the Shrew and The Awakening are two novels

that portray a woman who, in some way, is controlled by someone. Back then, women

were not independent: they did not lead their own life until they took their own

constitutional rights into their own hands. Through the years, women have made a big

difference on society for future women of America. The women in the 1800 s have made

more of a difference than any woman today because of their dedication and determination

to give women in the future a better life.

The Taming of the Shrew, written by William Shakespeare, portrays two daughters

whose decisions were made by their father. Back then, women were not respected as well

as men were. They were seen as property more than they were seen as people. Bianca, a

young maiden in the novel, was arranged to be married to a man that would be able to

support her financially and who would give her the most worldly possessions. Anyone

could pursue her only if her father was able to find a good enough suitor for her older

sister, Katherine. Katherine is the noisier of the two and has no suitors because of her

shrewed manor. Yet her father is adament that she shall be married before Bianca. So, in a

sense, these two girls were controlled by their father. He was the one to decide who they

were to spend the rest of their lives with. The two girls had no choice, no say in who they

would marry and love.

Having an arranged marriage was not very common in the years that followed.

Even still, it was uncommon for women to make their own decisions. Before the Women s

Rights Movement was started in 1848, women were seen as property. Men were

completely in control of almost any situation. In Elizabeth Cady Stantons Declaration of

Sentiments, she wrote, The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and

usurpation s on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment

of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world

(Eisenberg). Later she goes on to list what women have been denied and how they have

been treated. Elizabeth Cady Stanton started the Women s Rights Movement giving many

women a chance to be free from any sort of isolation.

In a sense, woman were isolated from doing what they wanted to do. In the novel

The Awakening, there is a woman named Edna who is vacationing on the Grand Isle with

her husband and two children. She is relatively an independent person, but due to the time

period and the environment she is in, she has to be controlled. Most of the women on the

island are women who obey their husbands and take care of their children, as all wives are

expected to do. In the novel, there are many instances where Edna does not listen to her

husband and many times when her kids are away she does not worry about them. Out of

site, out of mind, describes how Edna feels about her kids when they are away. She is not

like the Creoles on the island. Edna wants to be her own person. She has affairs with

different men and declares that she belongs to herself and that she can give herself to

whom she pleases. As the story goes on, her independence increases, but she really never

reaches complete independence and commits suicide. Edna wanted to have what Elizabeth

Cady Stanton and many other women fought for: independance.

For many women, independence was a big part of who they are. Back in 1848, it

only took a few determined women to stand up for their independence which would later

change the way women were treated. These women who made these changes happen were

sick of being treated as property, possessions, and slaves. When a woman took a husband,

she lost what limited freedom she might have had as a single adult (Ruthsdotter). The

basic job of a woman was to get married, tend to the house, and raise a family. The

woman has very limited time to herself or a chance to do what she wants to do.

Unlike Edna, a woman was expected to care more for her family than herself. She

was to tend to them and see to it that she make them happy. Edna was a woman who

sought for her independence. She wanted to be able to live her life on her own and to

make her own decisions. Marriage was arranged by fathers of daughters, as in The Taming

of the Shrew, and once they were married the woman had no freedom. Katherine was

tamed by her appointed husband in the end of the novel. Whenever he called for her, she

tended to him. Whatever he wanted and whatever he said to do she would do it for him.

That sort of treatment is what women were fighting against. Women no longer wanted to

be treated like slaves.

Many women have felt like Edna did and wanted the ability to not only say that

they were their own person but to be able to be treated like one. Just like the sisters from

The Taming of the Shrew, many daughters had no choice in who to love. It was not until

1848 when a couple of women were determined to stand up for what they believed in.

From that point on, women fought for equal rights. They fought for their freedom, for

their independence, for their right to be heard, treated and seen as people.

Women of the 1800 s paved the way for women today. When Bianca and

Katharine were pursued, their father made the decision for them. He picked who their

husband was going to be. With Edna, she was constantly trying to be her own person. She

wanted her freedom, and she wanted to make her own decisions. These are only two

examples of how women were treated. This kind of treatment continued until Elizabeth

Cady Stanton and others decided to take a stand. She and a few friends decided to act on

what every woman was only gossiping about. It all started with a discussion over tea

about how women were being treated. With many followers and determined women, years

later women had the right to vote (Eisenberg). Women’s right to vote gave women a

chance to voice their opinions and finally start to be able to live their own lives. Who

would have thought that only a few people voicing their opinions would have made such a

tremendous effect of history? So it is true when people say that one person can make a

difference.

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