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The Changes to Revolutionary Europe

Revolutionary is engaged in or promoting political revolution. In order to have a change, you must make a change. For example, when Mary Wollstonecraft talks about the equality of women and how the government makes females look weaker than males, she's trying to make a change in history. She doesn't want everyone to think women are just child carriers and she's trying to make everyone realize that women have the same power as men. Another example is Olympe de Gouges. She challenged society by making people aware of this inequality. She wrote a play called *Declaration of the Rights of Woman* after Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote a book called *the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. These women were one of the few who didn't care about society's or the government's opinion of them.

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. There were different sections but the Preface, Chapter I, and Chapter XII talk about equality, the rights and involved duties of mankind, and national education. Starting with the Preface, she states that it's essential for women to be able to see as equal to men to be able to make progress in society. They were seen as weaker because they were only seen to carry children and that they could never compete with men. She quotes ¹“... has been more - grossly insulted in France than even in England, till their women have treated as prudish that attention to decency which instinctively observe.” When Mary moves onto Chapter I, which talks about the rights and involved duties of mankind, she addresses some of the major problems in Europe at that time. Those problems happen to be the new republic's principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. These

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, SHU Blackboard, page 1, Nov. 20th, 2016.

were seen as opening a new chapter in the struggle against aristocracy and for the democratic society. When Rousseau wrote his book, he thought a general will had to be determined which Mary didn't like. Mary goes on to think that every profession that is high ranking is highly likely to cause harm to morality because society is based on many different and not one individual detail. She quotes this, by saying ²“ ... the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge, that distinguish the individual, and the direction the laws which bind society: and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable if mankind is viewed collectively.” In chapter XII, Mary talks about National Education. In this chapter, she questions if public education is better or if private education is better. When you go through the differences between the two, you can't really decide which is better. They both have pros and cons. As you can tell, Mary wanted a lot for society.

Another feminist, as I mentioned earlier, is Olympe de Gouges. Before I give you information on Olympe and what she did, I'll give you information on the book that started it all. Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote a book called A Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in the late summer of 1789. What this book was about is the general will and how the concept of the state representing the general will of the citizens is the right way of living life. Some of the ideas portrayed, like individuals must be safeguarded against the random choice of police or judicial actions, were anticipated by the 18th-century parlements. Also, another idea was how French jurists and economists such as the physiocrats had insisted on the inviolability of private property. Rousseau thought the responsibility of government was to be carried by elected representatives. He quotes a statement from article VI of this book saying, ³“all the citizens, being equal in [the eye of the law], are equally admissible to all public dignities, places, and employments,

² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, SHU Blackboard, page 6, Nov. 20th, 2016.

³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Declarations of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, SHU Blackboard, page 2, Nov. 20th, 2016.

accordingly to their capacity and without distinction other than that of their virtues and of their talents.”

What he’s saying is this statement of principles contained in the declaration provided the kernel of a much more radical reordering of society than that had yet taken place. Now once Olympe read that book, she wrote a book in response called Declaration of Rights of Women in the fall of 1791. She had hoped to expose the failures of the French Revolution in the recognition of gender equality. She failed to create any lasting impact on the direction of the Revolution, unfortunately. In her book, she quotes ⁴“Man, are you capable of being fair? A woman is asking at least you will allow her that Tell me? What gave you the sovereign right to oppress my sex?” She demanded that the reader notice nature and the rules of the animals surrounding them - in every other species, sexes coexist and intermingle peacefully and fairly. Olympe asks why humans can’t act likewise and demand that the National Assembly order Declaration apart of the French law. In the preamble to her declaration, she says ⁵“the sex that is superior in beauty as it is in courage during the pains of childbirth recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme being the following rights of woman and the female citizen.” She explains that women, as well as men, are guaranteed natural, untakeable rights, and political institutions are instituted with the purpose of protecting these rights. Lastly, Olympe blames the National Assembly for lowering women’s place in society. She said Condorcet declared ⁶“he who votes against the right of another, whatever the religion, color, or sex of that other, had henceforth abjured his own.”

When it comes to wanting a change, you best believe society will get a chance. Sadly even in the present day, some people don’t see women equal. This is unfortunate because women have achieved a lot throughout history.

⁴ Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*, SHU Blackboard, page 4, Nov. 20th, 2016

⁵ Olympe de Gouges, *Declarations of the Rights of Woman*, SHU Blackboard, page 6, Nov. 20th, 2016

⁶ Olympe de Gouges, *Declarations of the Rights of Woman*, SHU Blackboard, page 6, Nov. 20th, 2016

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