

# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



## ALYSSA MYERS

I love being a Black woman because of how different we all are. We come in all forms, and there is no right or wrong way for us to be who we are. I love that our sisterhood and Black Girl Magic makes us a tribe. We wear colors, patterns and hairstyles like crowns. I love being a Black woman because of our glowing, sun kissed skin. I love being a Black woman because of my hair; my natural curls are beautiful and unapologetically unique. I love that I carry a history of triumph. I use my voice to navigate the pain that my ancestors and current women of color go through in society. I love being a Black woman because of civil rights heroes such as Rosa Parks, Diane Nash, Josephine Baker and Daisy Bates. I love being a Black woman because of modern inspirations such as Angela Bassett, Madam C.J. Walker, Oprah Winfrey and Michelle Obama. I love being a Black woman because of musical artists such as Aretha Franklin, Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, Diana Ross and Chaka Khan. I love being a Black woman because of shows and movies that represent me such as "Hidden Figures," "Living Single," "Little" and "Nappily Ever After." I love being a Black woman because of all the blood, sweat and tears our mothers, aunts, grandmothers and friends spilt while taking care of us. I love being a Black woman because of my beautiful, little sisters. I love being a Black woman because of my friendships and bonds with other beautiful, Black women. I love being a Black woman because of all the hard work and love my mother has given and guided me with. I love being a Black woman because it reminds me that I am powerful beyond measure and can transcend anything this world throws at me. I love being a Black woman because no matter the opinions on how Black women and girls should be, dress or act, Black women will always unapologetically be the Black queens we were born to be.

## ANGIE ROSENTHAL

One thing I love about being a woman is the default support of other women. In my experience, there is a default expectation –you might even call it a “girl code”– for women to support one another. We all seem to understand that it is hard out there, especially for us ladies, and by helping each other we are helping ourselves. For example, the recent Pixar hit “Turning Red” is the first Pixar movie to be directed by a woman. To give that context, there have been twenty-five Pixar feature-length films, and somehow this is the first one with a woman director. That’s one of the reasons I watched the movie, I wanted to support another woman. Her success will lead to more women-directed Pixar films and just woman directors in general. This type of support extends to smaller things, like going out of the way to shop at women-owned Etsy shops or leaving good reviews at women-owned businesses. I love that instinctive to support one another. Whenever I partake in this girl code or witness it happening, I feel like I’m part of something bigger than myself. In a way, it’s a default support of the future.

## REBECCA VANDERKOOI

Being a woman is certainly not for the faint of heart, between the gender pay gap, and the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, there are definite challenges I have experienced as a woman. However, I am still proud of my gender identity, a big reason for this is because women so often support and lift one another up in ways that inspire and encourage me. As society continues to grow and change, the idea of what defines a woman is changing as well. Women now have much more freedom to express themselves, to wear what makes them the most comfortable, to marry who they desire, to work whatever job they want, and to go against traditional gender roles if they so choose. Women weren’t handed power the way men were, every right we now have we’ve had to fight for, that makes us resilient, outspoken and powerful. What makes women powerful is our unity, our strength

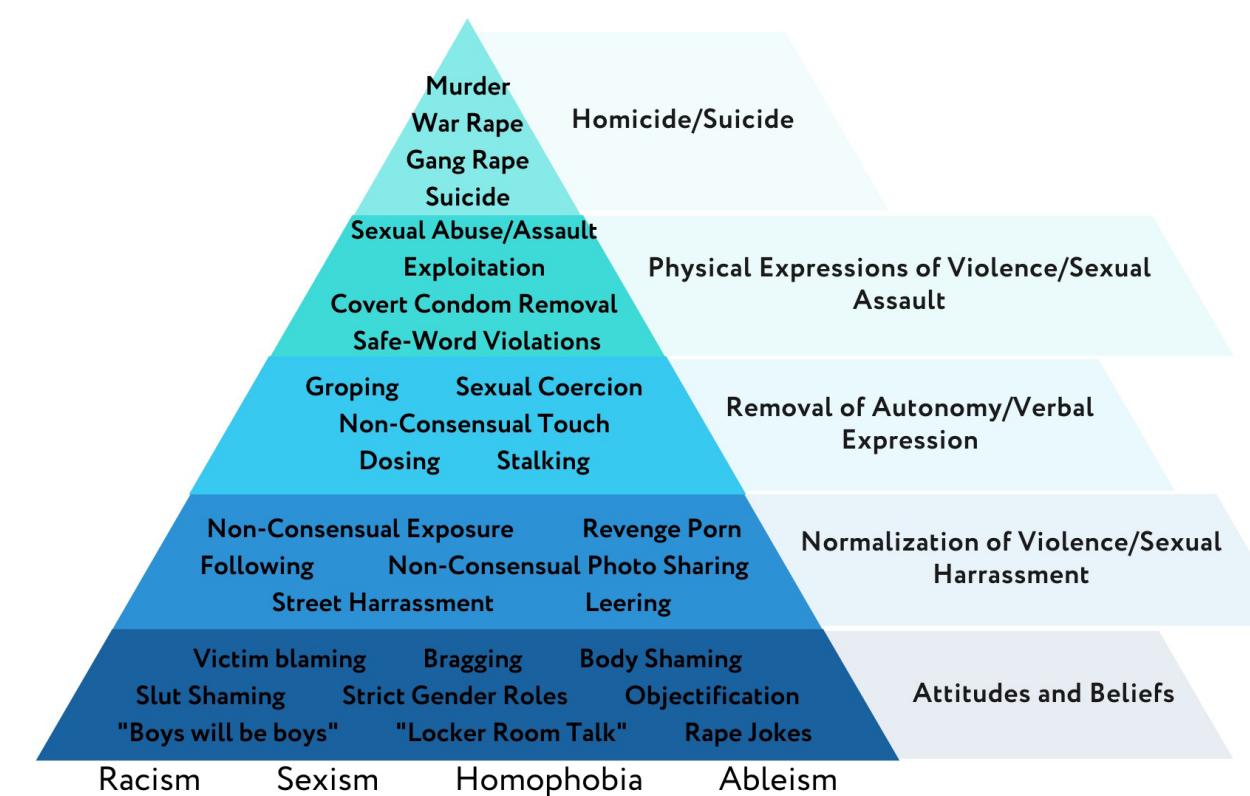
## GIULIANA DENICOLÒ

What do I love about being a woman? I love the power that it holds. Being feminine, being a woman, anything in that realm is looked at so negatively or even pitied in the face of sexism or inequality. But I think that being a woman is powerful and should not have the stigma behind it that it does. Yes, sexism is very real and current, but it does not overtake the definition of what is truly means to be a woman. We are powerful because we take what we deserve. We fight for our rights, and we fight to be equal. Before this year, being a woman to me was just that. After I researched feminism and took a class that educated me on sexism and inequality, I now can say that it is so much more to me. Being a woman is not just my sex, it is a part of who I am and that makes me feel empowered. The thing is, as women, we’re used to people trying to make us feel powerless and we don’t let it happen, that what makes us powerful. We are undermined and the fact that we rise above and prove ourselves makes us powerful. Being a woman is powerful, regardless of what society makes it look like.

## MARISSA RUSSELL

Pink, barbie dolls, skirts and other cutesy things. These are what femininity is ‘supposed’ to look like. Objects with bows and ribbons are shoved in our faces and little girls are told to wrap their personality into this feminine ideal. Because femininity seemed like this two-dimensional ideology, I thought I was never going to be able to enjoy being a girl. I was raised with boys, so I knew the different shades of mud better than pink and all the names of tools in a tool box. I learned after years of struggling that everyone was wrong about what a female should look like. I can make feminism look like whatever I want it to be, and it is not linear and can change constantly. Femininity doesn’t look like this for me. Being raised by a single mother made me see femininity as hard work and dedication and not being put into a box people already assumed you belonged in. There is no specific way it must look because femininity looks like whatever you want it to be. There is no correct way for it to look. For me, I enjoy having black nails and high heeled boots with spikes and not being something everyone expects.

# Objectification and interpersonal violence



Graphic provided by: Melody Antel



Photo by: Mariana Searl | Torch Photographer

Melody Antel is a communications intern for the Anti-Violence Alliance.

## Anti Violence Alliance student intern explains the levels of sexism

**Melody Antel**  
Guest Writer

The objectification of women has a significant impact on interpersonal violence against women.

Interpersonal violence includes domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking. Viewing women as objects and expecting them to submit to gender norms increases the chances of violence against women.

Calling out objectifications is one way that we can help decrease violence. Objectification can happen in the workplace, in schools, on the streets and in the media. It breaks down a women's worth and takes away our power. We need to make sure our community is not a safe space for objectification, racism, sexism, homophobia and ableism.

Objectification in the workplace also contributes to women being treated poorly and seen as unequal. Sexual comments and inappropriate touching are both ways to put down women and keep the glass ceiling over us, especially in competitive fields.

The same goes for objectification in the classroom and on the streets. Catcalling and sexual jokes are both ways that women are objectified in these spaces.

Dress codes are another way that girls in the classroom are sexualized. The idea behind the dress code is that it will prevent boys from being distracted, and they imply that young women's bodies are sex objects that need to be covered. Dress codes are harmful to young women and are a form of objectification. The sexualization of women in the workplace and schools is a way to keep women from learning and power.

Once I was aware of the extent of objectification, I saw it everywhere I looked. One study I've done was on the objectification seen in the television show "America's Next Top Model." The models are seen as sex objects used to sell products. They are judged for their physique and sex appeal. We see this type of objectification in marketing.

The selling of beautification products is also harmful to women. They encourage one to change their face or body to be

accepted by men and society. We are more than our physical appearance, we are more than an object for the male gaze.

As we realize the expectations society places on us, we begin to self-objectify as well. We see ourselves as an object of pleasure or use. I often submit to self-objectification when I compare myself to others on social media. It's important to not compare yourself to others and support all women, as well as yourself.

We should not be reduced to what we look like. Women's bodies are beautiful, but so are our minds. It's also interesting how we are frequently sexualized, while our sexuality is considered taboo. A woman who is open about her sexuality is "too much," but a woman who is closed about it is "not enough." We need a society that empowers women and doesn't objectify them. In order to have a society like that, everyone has to do their part in creating a safe space for women to thrive.

These harmful portrayals of women allows society to normalize violence against women. Society tends to view sex-

ual assault as extremely harmful, but it normalizes objectification by not seeing it in the same light. Catcalling, inappropriate touching, groping, sending unsolicited nudes, body-shaming, rape jokes and sexual coercion are all examples of sexual violence that society doesn't see as harmful.

In order to prevent the more recognized forms of sexual violence, we need to topple its foundation. Stopping the objectification of women can help prevent further crimes against women.

As a community, we must acknowledge the different experiences that each person endures. The female experience of sexual violence keeps us from success, and objectification is one root of sexual violence. If you see or hear someone objectifying another person, let them know that what they are doing is harmful, or have someone else say something to them. It's possible they won't change their ways, but they need to know that our community is not a safe space for objectification.

## Literature for ladies

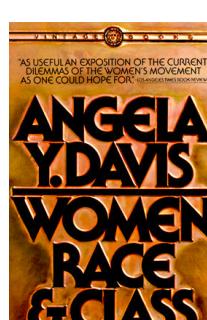
### Book recommendations by and for women



"Men Explain Things to Me" by  
Rebecca Solnit

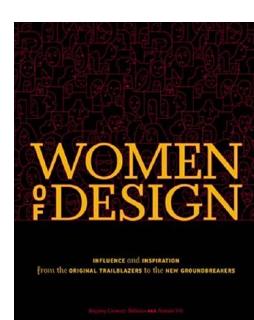
"The Unwomanly Face of War"  
by Svetlana Alexievich

History professor Tracy Busch



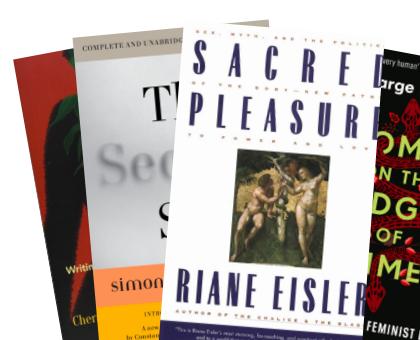
"Women, Race & Class" by  
Angela Davis

Alyssa Myers



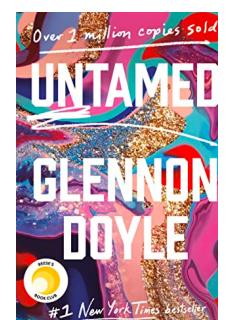
"Women of Design: Influence  
and Inspiration From The  
Original Trailblazers To The New  
Groundbreakers" by Armin Vit  
and Bryony Gomez-Palacio

Design Professor Alison Popp



"The Second Sex" by Simone  
De Beauvoir

"Sacred Pleasure" by Riane  
Eisler



"Untamed" by Glennon Doyle

Jessica Oakes

"This Bridge Called my Back"  
edited by Cherrie Moraga and  
Gloria Anzaldua

"Woman on the Edge of Time"  
by Marge Piercy

Women and gender studies  
professor Laurel Humphrey

# Not “woman” enough

## A trans perspective on Women’s History Month

Journey Ebels

Guest Writer

I'm usually not one to follow sports. I'm not the athletic type, and there's plenty of other interesting content to consume for me. But I saw a sports story recently that hit a little closer to home, so I thought it'd be important enough to talk about.

There was a post shared by one of my relatives on Facebook the other day about Lia Thomas, a recently-famous trans woman swimmer who won a 500-yard race at a Division I tournament, and how the second place swimmer, Emma Weyent, is the “real winner,” and that “second is the new first. #savewomenssports.” There's a lot of controversy around Thomas and her victory in this race, and it really boils down to one thing: transphobes opposing Thomas don't think of her as a real woman.

This isn't the first instance of controversy in sports around women. According to an article from NPR, there was an Olympic track runner named Caster Semenya who faced similar discrimination during the Olympics last year for having “unnaturally high levels of testosterone.” Semenya, as well as several other women who won medals in the 2016 Olympics, have faced a lot of backlash for existing. They have faced countless cries of them “not really being women,” and while these women are technically intersex, by all other definitions they are women. So which definition is the important one? Should it matter?

This issue extends beyond sports—beyond issues of chromosomes or testosterone—into the lives of women everywhere. There's a societal expectation around existing, as almost every woman has experienced. How you dress, how much makeup you wear, how you act, the interests you have and the job you hold are items on an endless list of female expectations, and if they aren't followed, you are “less of a woman.” Don't know how to cook? Less of a woman. Dress masculine? Less of a woman. Didn't wear makeup to work? Less of a woman. There's a lot of pres-

sure to be a “real woman,” and consequences for being less than range from social ostracism, to lower pay and physical assault because being “less of a woman” ends up translating to “less of a person.”

All these lines and standards are used to justify a lot of injustices and abuse directed towards women across the globe, but even more so for members of the LGBTQ community. I've read story after story about the abuse and assault trans people face across the globe for standing up and saying who they are. There are even countries where it's illegal for them to exist. Even still, we are bombarded by people telling us we're “not trans enough,” even if they “respect” trans people for not getting surgery, or not starting hormones, or not presenting publicly, or not sounding “right” or a whole laundry list of items we need to check to truly be considered “trans,” let alone a woman, man or person.

So many people work to gatekeep the trans community, drawing lines and making regulations that make it really hard to be recognized for who we are. It's tough! And the lines they draw very rarely make sense. Not trans unless you have surgery? Now only the rich can be “really” trans. Not trans unless you present correctly? Now only people from countries where it's legal to be trans can be “really” trans, or people who have families that won't immediately disown them. And what even is presenting “correctly”? We've already gone through the issues of defining what a woman is.

Being a woman is tough, and being a trans woman is even tougher, from the societal vitriol toward Thomas trying to do her best to swim, to the number of women killed for the audacity to be trans. And that's on top of the lines and regulations that women have placed on them by society.

With Women's History Month coming to a close, it's important to acknowledge the struggle, the abuse, the discrimination and the systems that women have had to deal with and fight through in order to earn the rights that men gave freely to themselves. Women have accomplished

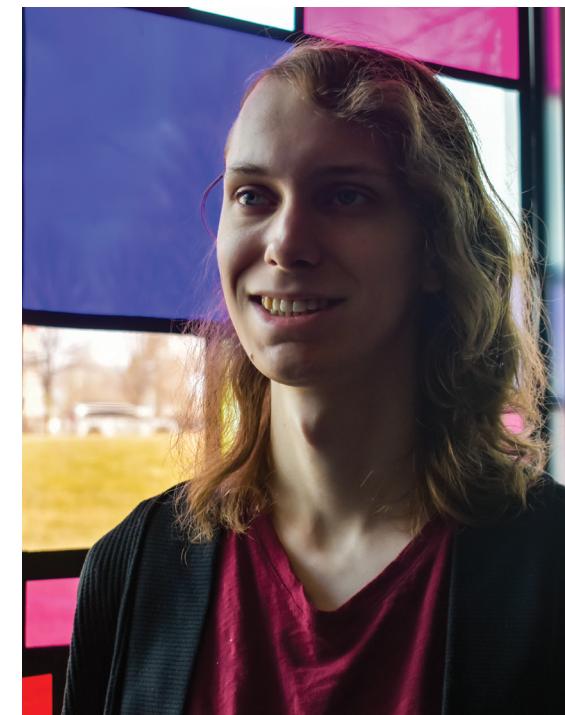


Photo by: Cassie Jessup | Multimedia Editor

amazing things despite the adversity, and those achievements should be celebrated! But imagine the things we could do without having to break down a thousand walls to accomplish them.

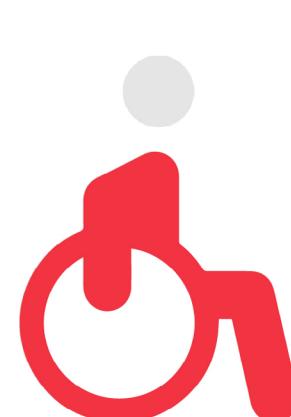
I promise you that trans women are not the enemy, despite the hatred and lies said about us. We're in this struggle together. So whenever you see a story in the news about a trans woman like Thomas winning a swim race, remember that we're not trying to invade or take away anything from other women. We're just people trying our best to be ourselves, even when it feels the world is against us. Just like everyone else.

**Men**

\$1.00

**Women**

93¢ for every \$1.00

**Disabled Women**

80¢ for every \$1.00

**Trans Women**

60¢ for every \$1.00

# Observing Equal Pay Day

## Breaking down the gender pay gap

**Rebecca Vanderkooi**

Opinions Editor

Equal Pay Day was observed on March 15 in the United States, the earliest it's ever been acknowledged.

According to a proclamation on National Equal Pay Day released on March 14 on the White House's website, this day has existed for over 25 years.

“This year, Equal Pay Day falls on March 15, the earliest we have ever marked the occasion. The earlier that Equal Pay Day arrives, the closer our Nation has come to achieving pay fairness. But while we should celebrate the progress we have made, as I have said in the past, we should not be satisfied until Equal Pay Day is no longer necessary at all,” President Joe Biden wrote.

Pew Research reported that on average in 2020, women earned 84% of what men earned in both full and part-time positions. Based on these numbers, it would take women an extra 42 days to earn what men did.

Furthermore, in 2020, women between the ages of 25-34 earned 93 cents for every dollar a man in the same age group

made. This is compared to 1980 when women in the same age group earned 33 cents less than their male counterparts. While there is still a wage gap, over the past 40 years there has been a 26-cent increase in average pay for women ages 25-34.

Census.gov includes average pay disparities from every state, as well as the country. In Michigan, the yearly average for male earnings is \$53,435 compared to the female average of \$41,560. This means that yearly there is an average pay difference of \$11,875.

In 2017, Pew Research reported that approximately four-in-ten working women said they experienced gender discrimination at work. Additionally, one in four employed women said they earned less than men doing the same job. Only 5% of men had a similar complaint.

Most of the statistics included above compare white women's salaries.

The disparities are even greater for Black, Native American, Latina and certain subpopulations of Asian women when compared to white men. Disabled women also continue to experience significant dis-

parities and make 80 cents for every dollar compared to men with disabilities,” Biden wrote.

Another subgroup that has experienced more pay disparity is trans women. According to the 19th News, a snapshot poll by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and a California-based market research firm found that trans women make 60 cents on the dollar compared to all workers.

While there has been progress, there is still discrimination against women, especially women apart of minority groups. Many wonder why the pay gap continues to persist.

According to Pew Research, it is a combination of factors. This can include educational attainment, occupational segregation and work experience.

“Even though women have increased their presence in higher-paying jobs traditionally dominated by men, such as professional and managerial positions, women as a whole continue to be overrepresented in lower-paying occupations relative to their share of the workforce. This may contrib-

ute to gender differences in pay,” Pew Research reported.

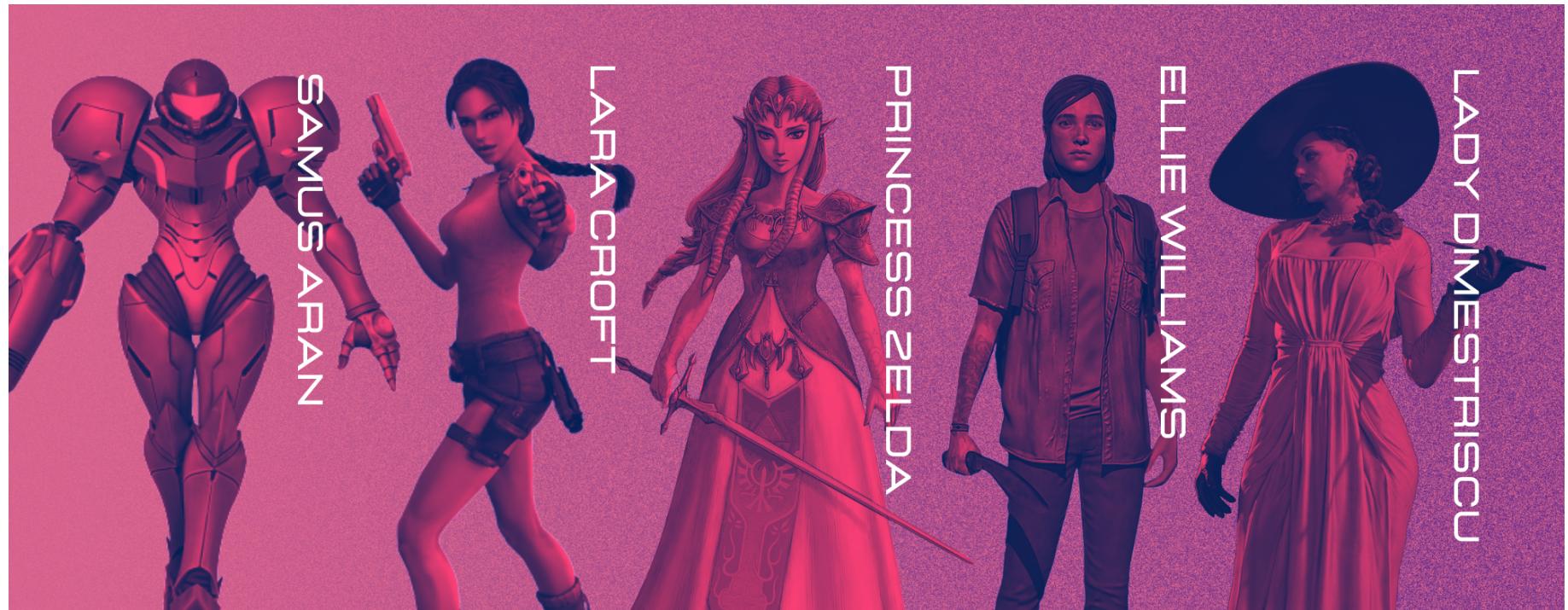
Another factor that may impact the wage gap is that many women are mothers, and this can disrupt their career paths. A 2016 survey found that mothers who took leave after having a child or adopting took more time off than fathers. The median length of leave for mothers is 11 weeks, while the average for fathers is one week.

“Mothers were also nearly twice as likely as fathers to say taking time off had a negative impact on their job or career. Among those who took leave from work in the two years following the birth or adoption of their child, 25% of women said this had a negative impact at work, compared with 13% of men,” Pew Research reported.

While Women's History Month is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of women and the advancement in women's rights, it's also important to acknowledge the continued challenges for women, including equal rights with regard to pay.

# Women in Gaming

How women protagonists have made gaming history



**Angie Rosenthal**  
Torch Photographer

Video games are commonly regarded as a male-dominated format, both in their target demographic and in their characters. But with each year this outlook is continually changing. According to Statistic, just last year over 45% of gamers were women. Yet despite this rise in women in gaming, the characters on-screen mostly cater to the male demographic. As of 2020, 18% of video game protagonists were female and 23% were male. This is quite the rise in diversity, considering just half a decade ago only 2% of video game protagonists were female. In celebration of the rise in women in gaming and Women's History Month, here are a few of the most iconic female characters in gaming and how they all made gaming history.

#### Samus – Metroid series – Nintendo

In her debut game "Metroid" from 1986, Samus Aran being a girl was a big twist

of the game. Her gender was revealed after you finish the game, where she takes off her helmet and reveals her long, blonde hair. This was revolutionary in gaming, making her one of the first playable female video game characters. Samus continues to be iconic to this very day, with her most recent gaming venture being last year's "Metroid Dread."

#### Lara Croft – Tomb Raider series – Square Enix

Just a decade after Samus Aran's debut, Lara Croft came onto the scene in 1996's "Tomb Raider". Croft is a '90s icon, whose popularity has lasted to this day. In an era where bit-games were the norm, 1996's "Tomb Raider" changed the game with their innovative 3D graphics, making the "Tomb Raider" franchise one of the most important gaming franchises of all time. Her most recent adventure, "Shadow of the Tomb Raider," is another award-winning success for Square Enix.

#### Lady Dimitrescu – Resident Evil Village – Capcom

Lady Dimitrescu has gained an impressive amount of popularity. In "Resident Evil Village" from 2021, Countess Alcina Dimitrescu has only about seventeen minutes of screen-time. Yet her look and demeanor propelled her to internet popularity. On TikTok, #ladydimitrescu has over a billion views. On Instagram, there are over 100 thousand posts about her. In less than a year, Lady Dimitrescu became a gaming icon that is now one of the main faces of the Resident Evil franchise.

#### Zelda – The Legend of Zelda series – Nintendo

When the first "Legend of Zelda" game debuted in 1986, audiences assumed that the protagonist was Zelda. But, in actuality, the protagonist was named Link, and Zelda was the princess he was saving. It took over two decades for Zelda to become a playable character in her own franchise, which was in 2009's "The Legend of Zelda:

Spirit Tracks." She has not been playable in her own franchise ever since. This is an example of negative female representation in gaming. It was one step forward when Zelda became the first woman to be the face of a gaming franchise since the '80s, but it was two steps back when they made her mostly unplayable and gave a male protagonist the spotlight instead.

#### Ellie – The Last of Us 1 and 2 – Sony

Ellie is one of the most important and influential gaming protagonists of this generation because she is the first lesbian protagonist in a triple-A game. A triple-A game means the game has a high budget and is made by a high-profile company; it's basically a gaming blockbuster. The success of The Last of Us series and Ellie's character has changed gaming forever and should lead to more big-name gaming titles with LGBT+ protagonists in the future.

## RESOURCES

### CAMPUS

**Anti-Violence Alliance**  
Raven Hills:  
RavenHills@ferris.edu

**Ferris Women's Network**  
fwn@ferris.edu

**National Organization for Women - RSO**

**You Beautiful Black Women - RSO**  
Autumn Peoples:  
peoplea2@ferris.edu  
Zenise Triplett:  
triplez@ferris.edu

**Title IX Coordinator**  
231-591-2088

### BIG RAPIDS

**Women's Information Service (WISE)**  
231-796-6600  
[www.wiseagainstviolence.org](http://www.wiseagainstviolence.org)



### MICHIGAN

**Michigan Sexual Assault Help Line**  
1-855-VOICES4



### NATIONAL

**Futures Without Violence**

**National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence**

**Culture of Respect**

**Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)**

**Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER)**