Women Who Have Run for U.S. President—A Historical Look at Leadership From the 1870’s to the Present

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A historical study was conducted to determine how many women have pursued the Presidency of the United States of America (the U.S.), and the character, leadership qualities, and strengths each of them brought to the election process, and to build our country as a nation. It reviews the period from the 1870’s when our first woman presidential nominee, Victoria Woodhull, put her name in contention to the present current election dynamics, exploring the challenges each of these candidates faced in pursuit of this daunting endeavor. At least 33 women have run for president of the United States, yet to this date (November, 2016), no one have been elected to the highest leadership position in the nation.

Keywords: president leadership, women candidates, history, courage, constitution, suffrage, vote

Rationale for the Study

In early 2015, I was asked by one of my students: “Has there ever been a woman nominated for president in the two major political parties?” I thought I knew the answer, but after pondering this question, I said, “I need to investigate this, because I am not truly sure.”

Second, I have tried to raise independent thinking daughters whom I believe have the capability to do amazing things in the world and work in a society that values their contributions. So, I dedicate this in part to them.

Third, my mom had a bumper sticker, which read: “Women are natural born leaders. You are following one.” Women have had a profound impact on my growth as a man.

Fourth, to see a young girl like Macey Hensley, at the age of six, possessing a strong knowledge of our former and current presidents and proudly announcing that she wants to be in this position someday, is very inspiring and motivating to young women, and those contemplating the presidential process.

Also, I believe it is important that we research, understand, and report how far we have progressed as a nation in terms of equality, and some of the challenges we still face. In addition, it should be emphasized that I enjoy studying and communicating findings about history.

After examining the question of women who have run for president in the two major parties, we expanded the review to those individuals who were nominated in third party candidacies as well.

The Declaration of Independence and Its Connection to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights

How does the Declaration of Independence (1776) begin? When in the course of human events, it becomes
necessary for people to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them to one another… It goes on to state:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are… life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. (Declaration of Independence, 1776)

And in our Constitution (1787), “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union…” this was the Preamble to the Constitution. There were seven Articles in the Constitution. They included …: (a) The Legislative Branch; (b) The Executive Branch; (c) The Judicial Branch; (d) The Relation of the States to One Another; (e) Amending the Constitution; (f) National Debts; and (g) Ratifying the Constitution. In this discussion, Part (e) is where the primary focus is. There were 27 amendments ratified by Congress.

In 1789, Congress transmitted 12 proposed amendments to the State Legislatures. Amendment 3 through 12 became the Bill of Rights adopted in 1791.

Amendments 1 and 2 respectively, were: (a) Freedom of Religion, Speech, and the Press; Right of Assembly and Petition; and (b) Right to Bear Arms.

And, what is the 19th Amendment about?—Women’s Suffrage (The Right to Vote)—proposed on June 4, 1919 and ratified in August 1920. This leads into our topic connecting it with Article II, Section 1 (Art. II, Sec. 1).

Since 1789, the Constitution had never directly prohibited women for running for President. Art. II, Sec. 1 spells out the basic qualifications for office that will be listed below in the Constitution and the Presidency section.

The Constitution and the Presidency

The Article reads, “No Person except a natural born citizen, or a citizen of the United States, at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the office of President; neither shall any person be eligible to that office who shall not have attained to the age of thirty five years, and been fourteen years a resident within the United States.” However, in reality, states controlled voting requirements and major political party nominations in the early years.

Women Who Have Run for President

The focus of this presentation is party-nominated women presidential candidates and other notable individuals who pursued the presidency. In the run for the Democratic nomination for president (2008), Hillary Clinton came closest of any woman to that date to win the presidential nomination of a major political party. Secretary of State and Senator Clinton is not the first woman to run for U.S. President, and not even the first to run for a major party’s nomination. As of 2016, Hillary Clinton is the first woman nominated by a major party, the Democratic Party.

Is There a Political Agenda and Progress?

This is not a political endorsement for the women of either major party currently running for President, nor any third party.

How have women been represented in presidential elections to date? What are the historical challenges for women running for our highest office? Has any progress been made?

Party Nominees

No major party has ever nominated a woman for U.S. president. However, it must be noted that two women have won the nominations of major parties for vice-presidential candidates: Geraldine Ferraro for the

Nominees are candidates nominated or otherwise selected by political parties for particular offices. Listed as nominees or nomination candidates are those women who achieved ballot access in at least one state (or, before the institution of government-printed ballots, had ballots circulated by their parties).

At least 35 women have run for the president of the United States. It is not as though American women have not tried. Most are unknown, and some represent parties that arguably merit obscurity—including the Surprise Party. Even though this party name may generate a musement, it is true that the women who mounted platforms to speak to their issues were courageous. Let us take a look at some of these presidential candidates, arranged chronologically by each woman’s first campaign for the office, with a brief discussion of the influence of the 19th Amendment intermixed.

**Victoria Woodhull—1872**

In 1872, Woodhull was the first female candidate for President of the United States. She was an activist for women’s rights and labor reforms. Woodhull was also an advocate of free love, by which she meant the freedom to marry, divorce, and bear children without government interference. Her occupations included suffrage activist, stockbroker, businesswoman, writer, and presidential candidate. She also played a role in the report of a sex scandal involving Henry Ward Beecher. She was also known as Victoria California Claflin, Victoria Woodhull Martin, “Wicked Woodhull,” and other names. With her sister, Tennessee, they were labelled “The Queens of Finance.”

While many historians and authors agree that Woodhull is the first woman to run for President of the United States, some have questioned the legality of her run. They disagree with classifying it as a true candidacy because she was younger than the constitutionally mandated age of 35. However, election coverage by contemporary newspapers did not suggest age was a significant issue. The presidential inauguration was in March 1873. Woodhull’s 35th birthday was in September 1873.

Her opposition to abortion is frequently cited by opponents of abortion when writing about first wave feminism. The most common Woodhull quotations cited by opponents of abortion are “The rights of children as individuals begin while yet they remain the fetus” (Woodhull, 1870). “Every woman knows that if she were free, she would never bear an unwished-for child, nor think of murdering one before its birth” (Dannenfelser, 2015). She also advocated, among other things, sex education, “marrying well,” and pre-natal care as the way to bear healthier children and prevent mental and physical disease.

Her arrest on obscenity charges a few days before the election for publishing an account of the alleged adulterous affair between the prominent minister Henry Ward Beecher and Elizabeth Tilton added to the sensational coverage of her candidacy. She did not receive any electoral votes, and there were conflicting evidences about popular votes. Many of the reforms and ideals Woodhull espoused for the working class, against what she saw as the corrupt capitalist elite, were extremely controversial in her time. Generations later, many of these reforms have been implemented and are now taken for granted. Some of her ideas and suggested reforms are still debated today.

Eventually, Horace Greeley (Democratic) and Ulysses S. Grant (Republican) squared off for the two major parties. Grant won, and is still remembered from the Civil War heroics of the 1860’s.
Belva Ann Lockwood—1884 & 1888

Lockwood posted two unsuccessful bids for the presidency under the National Equal Rights Party. She was thoroughly educated and did achieve her law doctorate.

Lockwood was the first woman attorney to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States. She was also the first woman to appear on official ballots as a candidate for U.S. President. She advocated for more options for women. Lockwood worked as a principal at several local schools for young women. She was then selected to head a girls’ seminary in Owego, New York, where she stayed for three years. Her educational philosophy was gradually changing after she met women’s rights activist Susan B. Anthony. Lockwood agreed with many of Anthony’s ideas about society’s restrictions on women. Anthony was concerned about the limited education that girls received. Courses at most girls’ schools chiefly prepared female students for domestic life and possibly for temporary work as teachers. Anthony spoke about how young women ought to be given more options, including preparation for careers in the business world, where the pay was better. Lockwood was encouraged to make changes at her schools.

She was a competent lawyer who drafted an anti-discrimination bill. In 1872, she introduced a bill for equal pay for federal government employees. She testified before Congress in support of legislation to give married women and widows more protection under the law. Because her practice was limited in the 1870’s due to social discrimination, Lockwood drafted an anti-discrimination bill to have the same access to the bar as male colleagues. From 1874 to 1879, she lobbied Congress to pass it. In 1879, Congress finally passed the law, which was signed by President Rutherford B. Hayes. It allowed all qualified women attorneys to practice in any federal court. Lockwood was sworn in as the first woman member of the U.S. Supreme Court bar on March 3, 1879. Late in 1880, she became the first woman lawyer to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Lockwood has been remembered in many ways.

In 1908, Syracuse University gave Lockwood an honorary law doctorate. A portrait of her at the time of that occasion hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington. During World War II, a Liberty Ship was named the Belva Lockwood. In 1986, she was honored with a postage stamp as part of the Great Americans series.

Women could not vote at that time, yet we had candidates that were eligible.

Representing a third party without a broad base of support, Lockwood did not have a serious chance of winning the presidency, and Notable American Women stated that she received about 4,100 votes.

Since women could not vote, and most newspapers were opposed to her candidacy, it was unusual that she received any votes. In an 1884 article, the Atlanta Constitution referred to her as “Old Lady Lockwood” and warned male readers of the dangers of “petticoat rule.”

In 1884, Grover Cleveland (Democrat) became president, and in 1888, Benjamin Harrison (Republican) beat out Grover Cleveland.

The 19th Amendment

By September 1920, the 19th Amendment giving all women the right to vote had been ratified, but it would take another two decades for the next significant female presidential candidate to emerge. Although Americans think of us as the leader in all things progressive, the fact is that 26 countries had granted women the right to vote before the U.S. did, and the same is true of electing women as national leaders. The U.S. falls
behind many others including Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, and even Pakistan, in setting this precedent. The 19th Amendment provided new hope for female candidates in the presidential arena.

Laura Clay—1920

In 1920, Laura Clay founded the Democratic Women’s Club of Kentucky, where she stated, “I am a Jeffersonian Democrat.”

In the same year, she was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. Her name was placed in nomination for President. She worked after 1920 for repeal of the 18th Amendment (prohibition), even though she herself was a teetotaler and a Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) member. Laura Clay supported women’s equal rights to education and vote. At the same time, she believed that Black citizens were not yet developed enough to vote.

She did support, in principle, that educated women of all races get the right to vote, and spoke at times against ignorant White voters. She contributed to an African American church project aimed at self-improvement. Also, she supported states’ rights and the idea of White superiority, and feared federal interference in Southern states’ voting laws. It would take another 20 years to see another viable candidate emerge.

The Surprise Party—1940

In 1940, Gracie Allen announced she was running for President of the United States on the Surprise Party ticket. Burns and Allen did a cross-country whistle-stop campaign tour on a private train, performing their live radio show in different cities. In one of her campaign speeches, Allen said, “I do not know much about the Lend-Lease Bill, but if we owe it we should pay it.” Another typical Gracie-ism on the campaign trail went like this, “Everybody knows a woman is better than a man when it comes to introducing bills into the house.” The Surprise Party’s mascot was the kangaroo, and their motto was that “It is in the bag.”

Three Candidates—1952

This period saw a dearth of candidates running for office, in part due to the immense popularity of Eisenhower. Ellen Linea W. Jensen from the Washington Peace Party, Mary Kennery from the American Party, and Agnes Waters from American Woman’s Party all were third party nominees. You may recall that after Harry Truman (1948 President) finished office, Republican Dwight Eisenhower beat Adlai Stevenson and took power in 1952 and again in 1956.

Margaret Chase Smith—1964

In 1964, Margaret Chase Smith arrived on the scene with a combination of poise and vigor. Margaret served as a Republican Senator from Maine, the first woman elected to both the House of Representatives and the Senate. At the 1964 Republican National Convention, she became the first woman to have her name placed in nomination for president at a major party’s convention. She was also known for her opposition to Senator Joseph McCarthy’s investigation tactics. She did not receive the nomination of her party, losing to Barry Goldwater.

Margaret was famous for her wit and wisdom. “When people keep telling you that you cannot do something, you kind of like to try it.” “Leadership is not manifested by coercion, even against the resented.
Greatness is not manifested by unlimited pragmatism, which places such a high premium on the end justifying any means and any measures.” “One of the basic causes for all the trouble in the world today is that people talk too much and think too little. They act impulsively without thinking. I always try to think before I talk.” “My creed is that public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation with full recognition that every human being is entitled to courtesy and consideration, that constructive criticism is not only to be expected but sought, that smears are not only to be expected but fought, that honor is to be earned, not bought.”

She took a stance on Senator Joe McCarthy’s tactics, “As a United States senator I am not proud of the way in which the Senate has been made a publicity platform for irresponsible sensationalism” (Lewis, 2015). “I do not want to see the Republican Party ride to political victory on the Four Horsemen of Calumny—Fear, Ignorance, Bigotry, and Smear.”

In the end that year, Lyndon Johnson (Democrat) along with Hubert Humphrey defeated Barry Goldwater for the presidency.

Charlene Mitchell—1968

Charlene was an African-American international socialist, feminist, labor and civil rights activist, and formerly a member of the Communist Party USA, which she joined at age of 16. She emerged as one of the most influential leaders in the party from the late 1950s to the 1980s. She now belongs to the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism.

Charlene’s early civil rights activism included organizing, in 1943 at the age of 13, both Black and White teenagers in pickets and other actions at the Windsor Theatre in Chicago, which segregated Black customers in the balcony, and also at a nearby segregated bowling alley. The lack of success of picketing and leafleting led the young Charlene to organize another action for her group of activists, who took the name of American Youth for Democracy. This group held a sit-in at the Windsor, with White members going up to the “colored-only” balcony while Black members took their seats in the auditorium’s “whites-only” section below. Nixon and Spiro Agnew ended up defeating Hubert Humphrey and Edmund Muskie in this election cycle.

In 1972, four noteworthy candidates announced their candidacy, and all merit a description of their respective bids.

Shirley Chisholm—1972

In 1972, Chisholm became the first woman to run for the Democratic presidential nomination as well as the first major party Black candidate. She came in fourth at the convention where George McGovern won the Democratic nomination.

“We live in revolutionary times.” “The shackles that various groups have worn for centuries are being cast off. This is evidenced by the ‘developing’ nations of the world, which we consider, for the most part, underdeveloped.” “Countries such as India, Ceylon, and Israel have women for Prime Ministers and in other decision-making positions. American women must stand and fight—be militant even—for rights which are ours.”

Her bid for the presidency was referred to as the “Chisholm Trail,” and she won a lot of support from students, women, and minority groups. She entered 11 primaries and campaigned in several states, particularly
Florida, but with little money, it was difficult to run an aggressive campaign. Overall, people in 14 states voted for Chisholm for President. After six months of campaigning, she had 28 delegates committed to vote for her at the Democratic Convention. Although she did not win the nomination, she received 151 of the delegates’ votes.

Patsy Takamoto Mink—1972

In 1972, a group of Liberal Democrats in Oregon asked Mink to be their presidential candidate, and she was on the ballot in Oregon’s May primary. Mink received just 2% of the vote, coming in eighth out of nine candidates.

She was the first woman of color to serve in the United States Congress, but it was the work that she did there that should be remembered. Mink represented many groups that, prior to her election, had been absent from national politics, working tirelessly to serve women, minorities, and the poor. She brought attention to issues that others ignored.

Linda Jenness—1972

She was involved in the case 26 F.C.C.2d 485 (1970), regarding media coverage of third-party candidates, which was not present at her time of running for office. Aged 31 at that time of the election, she did not meet the Constitutional age requirement to hold the office of President, but the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) was on the ballot in 25 states—six more than in 1968. She was qualified for the Ohio ballot but removed when she could not prove she was 35. As of September 2010, Linda Jenness was still active as supporter of the SWP.

Evelyn Reed—1972

Member of the American Trotskyist movement, socialist feminist, and one of the first to challenge anthropological and other spurious justifications for patriarchy, Reed was nominated as a candidate for President of the United States for the Socialist Workers Party in the United States presidential election, 1972. On the ballot in only three states (Indiana, New York, & Wisconsin), she received a total of 13,878 votes. She came in second to Linda Jenness, with 37,423 votes. Reed (1972) noted:

The woman question can only be resolved through the lineup of working men and women against the ruling men and women. This means that the interests of the workers as a class are identical; and not the interests of all women as a sex. Ruling-class women have exactly the same interests in upholding and perpetuating capitalist society as their men have. Thus, the emancipation of working women will not be achieved in alliance with women of the enemy class, but just the opposite; in a struggle against them as part and parcel of the whole class struggle.

In 1972, Nixon and Agnew defeated George McGovern and Sargent Shriver.

Margaret Wright—1976

Wright was a shipyard worker during World War II, and one of the principals of the film The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter. Her ticket was also endorsed by the Peace and Freedom Party. Bumper stickers advertised her as a “Socialist for President.” The ticket received 49,016 votes (0.06%). Wright was also a founder and activist of Women against Racism in the Watts section of Los Angeles.

Ellen McCormack—1976

As a representative for the rights to Life Party, she received 22 votes at the Democratic convention, but eventually won by Jimmy Carter. “Abortion is put forth as a solution for the poor, but I think the poor want
better housing, more jobs and food on their tables. I do not think aborting their babies makes them any happier. I think it probably contributes to their misery.”

McCormack made the decision to run just three years after the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade decision on abortion, declaring herself a candidate in the 1976 Democratic primaries for “the defense of unborn babies.” Overturning the court’s ruling with a constitutional amendment to ban abortion was her main focus.

Because of changes in federal election law, McCormack became the first female presidential candidate to qualify for federal campaign funding. She also was the first female candidate to receive Secret Service protection.

If you recall, in 1976, Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale defeated Gerald Ford and Bob Dole.

**Right to Life Party/Peace and Freedom Party/Workers World Party—1980**

Three women ran in this year, but they did not receive much attention: Ellen McCormack, Right to Life Party; Maureen Smith, Peace and Freedom Party; Deirdre Griswold, Workers World Party.

In this election year, Ronald Reagan, together with George H. W. Bush, defeated Jimmy Carter.

**Sonia Johnson—1984**

Sonia Johnson was a fifth-generation Mormon who came into the political sphere when the Mormon Church spoke out against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). An English professor and mother of four, she knew little about it until she became “uneasy” that her church was “opposing something with a name as beautiful as the ‘equal rights’ Amendment.” This eventually led Johnson to run for the presidency. Sonia Johnson from Citizens Party recorded 72,200 votes in 19 states. Johnson (1984) remarked:

> I am a feminist to the core and will be until I die… fiercely, passionately, reverently, and totally committed to justice for my sisters on this earth. I feel, frankly, as if I had been born in this time because I have always felt this way—even in the preexistence. This is the right time for me. I feel as if I have come home.

Gavrielle Holmes from Workers World Party also ran that year. But, once again, Ronald Reagan defeated Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro.

**Patricia Scott Schroeder—1988**

Here is a glimpse into the mindset of Schroeder, “Imagine a picture of the House floor of 406 women and 28 men or the Senate floor with 98 women and two men.” In 1972, Schroeder became the first congress woman. Her quarter-century career there made her the all-time leader on women’s issues, and her campaign for the 1988 presidential election was based on her belief that “America is man enough to back a woman.”

As co-founder of the bi-partisan Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues and as Democratic Whip, Schroeder became the lead sponsor of the Equal Rights Amendment, as well as other legislation to secure women’s rights in employment, education, and finance. Her strong sense of humor was reflected in her response to inquiries about running as a woman, “What choice do I have?” She reflected that more women would run for office if they only knew their history and could make realistic use of these stepping stones.

Schroeder found firm support among feminists for her 1988 presidential campaign—but not enough to win the Democratic nomination that went to Michael Dukakis. She came closer than any woman thus far, coming in third in a June 1987 Time poll. National Organization for Women (NOW) pledged $400,000, enough for her to qualify for federal matching funds, and Schroeder visited 29 states during 1987. Ever practical, her motto from
the beginning was “no dough, no go,” and when she could not raise sufficient money to compete against better-funded men, she ended her campaign that autumn.

**Lenora Fulani—1988**

Under the New Alliance Party, Lenora Fulani stated, “In unity lies power… There are millions of Americans looking to come together, looking to create this new force… changing the political culture (so that) not just money and top-down forces speak. I think our democracy is on the decline, because of the influence and corruption of the two-party system.”

Lenora Fulani combined a career as a psychologist with a life of activism. She explained, “I identify very strongly with the outsiders. I am a leader who has chosen to be outside corporate America and inside the real mainstream—with my people and other outsiders.”

In this year, George H. W. Bush and Dan Quayle defeated Michael Dukakis and Bentsen.

**From 1992 to 2008**


Elizabeth Dole is a noteworthy republican candidate in 2000, who generated a great deal of admiration and following.

**Elizabeth Hanford Dole—2000**

“Women share with men the need for personal success, even the taste of power, and no longer are we willing to satisfy those needs through the achievements of surrogates, whether husbands, children, or merely role models.” Elizabeth Hanford Dole was voted as “most likely to succeed” by her high school class, an astute prediction. The first woman to serve in two different Cabinet positions under two presidents, she ran for the Republican nomination in the presidential election of 2000.

After graduating from law school, at the encouragement of Senator Margaret Chase Smith, Hanford joined Richard Nixon’s administration as an assistant on consumer affairs, and he appointed her to the Federal Trade Commission shortly before he left office in 1973. She wed Kansas Senator Robert Dole in 1975; he was divorced, and they never had children.

When Democrats won the White House in 1976, Elizabeth Dole was out of office until 1983, when Ronald Reagan appointed her to head the Department of Transportation. The department was less than twenty years old at the time, and she was the first woman to hold the top position. She withdrew after a seven-month effort, when she had raised only $4.7 million compared to George W. Bush’s $57 million.

Some pointed out that her lack of support resulted from the fact that Dole rarely reached out to feminists during her career. Her poll numbers showed a particular lack of appeal to younger women. Statistical analysis of media coverage confirmed that she, too, was a victim of the old habit of focusing on personal qualities with female candidates, not on their issues. Dole’s campaign may have reinforced this idea. She often left the stage to
interact with audiences, a method that audiences loved—but which also allowed reporters to emphasize her style over substance.

In 2000, George W. Bush and Cheney defeated Gore and Lieberman.

**Carol Moseley Braun—2004**

Carol Moseley-Braun (Democrat) was elected to the Senate in 1992, which was considered the “Year of the Woman,” as many angry female voters came out to show their disagreement with the outcome of the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill proceedings. She became the first African American woman elected to the United States Senate, the first African American senator to be elected as a Democrat, and the first woman elected to the Senate from Illinois.

She graduated from the University of Chicago with a law degree and joined the Justice Department. Three years later, after being recruited by neighbors, she was elected to the Illinois House. In 1991, she ran for the Senate in Illinois. Illinois often votes Republican. However, Women All over America sent donations to help her defeat the Republican nominee, and she won 53% of the vote. The “Year of the Women” had mixed results elsewhere, but Carol Moseley-Braun was its best example. On September 11, 2003, she announced her run for the presidency at Howard University in Washington, D.C.. While acknowledging that it might be a “long-shot,” she did not think that this meant she could not win, and argued that her experience in local, state, national and international government made her a well-rounded candidate.

Many feminists were disappointed in Mosely-Braun’s Senate tenure, and some African Americans urged her to step down in favor of Black activist Al Sharpton. Yet when television journalist Diane Sawyer asked why she did not support another candidate who had a “real shot at victory,” she replied that her record was as strong as that of some male candidates: John Edwards had yet to stand for re-election; Howard Dean led a state with fewer residents than Cook County; and Al Sharpton had never held elective office.

Like other female candidates, Moseley-Braun found it difficult to raise money, and her well-publicized effort to get on the Virginia ballot by petition did not collect enough signatures. On January 15, 2004, four days before the Iowa caucuses, she dropped out on Jon Stewart’s *Daily Show*.

In this election cycle, Bush and Cheney defeated John Kerry and John Edwards.

**Hillary Rodham Clinton—2008**

Hillary Clinton wrote to NASA as a child inquiring how to become an astronaut. NASA replied that girls could not be astronauts. At the Grade 9, Hillary would sometimes come to class wearing her Girl Scout uniform. Perhaps not coincidentally, she would later promote school uniforms. How Hillary met Bill Clinton at Yale: She got up from her desk, walked over to him, extended her hand, and said, “If you keep looking at me, and I am going to keep looking back, we might as well be introduced. I am Hillary Rodham.” When she was a teenager, Hillary organized a baby-sitting group to look after the children of migrant Mexican workers in rural Illinois.

She was determined to meet her goals, and she has come closest of any female candidates to date and receive the nomination of a major party.

Clinton received more than 17 million votes during the Democratic National Convention, but trailed Barack Obama by 103 delegates at the final tally. Hillary was the first First Lady to hold a postgraduate degree, according to Yale Law (1973) and run for and be elected as a senator of New York in 2000. She broke through the cash ceiling for women by raising more than $212 million. Fund raising has always been the biggest
impediment to women candidates. Clinton’s 18-month campaign with intense media coverage may inspire more women to seek elective office.

**Cynthia McKinney—2008**

Running under the Green Party platform, Cynthia McKinney tallied 161,603 votes. She lamented in her plight as a Black female candidate, “They look at me, they see a Black woman, they say, She has got to be another Maxine Waters (a fiery Liberal from Los Angeles). Well, heck, I do not mind being another Maxine Waters when it comes to the strength and force of advocacy. But to judge me in my entirety by what I look like is quite base.”

In 2008, President Obama and Joe Biden received the nomination and defeated John McCain and Sarah Palin.

**Jill Stein—2012**

Jill is the most successful third-party female Presidential candidate, in terms of aggregate votes in a general election. It should be noted that Rosanne Barr also ran for the Green Party nomination, but did not receive the nomination. Michele Bachman from the Republican Party ran a very competitive campaign, but withdrew in January of 2012. Obama and Biden again won this election, and this time defeated the team of Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan.

Why do Third Parties Have Such a Difficult Time Getting Going?

Jill Stein is an excellent example of a third party candidate, who has a very good following of potential voters. Yet, the third party candidates are at a disadvantage because of federal campaign finance laws and rules dictating who can enter presidential debates and a lack of media attention. In addition, a significant amount of paperwork is required to become a viable candidate. When Ralph Nader announced in February 2004 that he would seek the presidential nomination, he was required to collect 1.5 million signatures in all states to appear on the ballot. Deadlines for those signatures begin as early as May 2004. Campaign finance rules say that a political party can only get government funding to run a race, if it has received a certain percentage of votes from the previous election.

**Carly Fiorina and Hillary Clinton—2016**

Thoroughly educated in Business Administration and Marketing, Carly Fiorina has served in executive positions for American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) and that company’s spinoff, Lucent. Most prominently, she held the role of chief executive officer (CEO) of Hewlett-Packard from 1999 to 2005. She continues to participate in getting her message out and remains in the race as of this writing. As mentioned earlier in the 2008 section, Hillary Clinton continues to be the strongest force for the Democratic Party in 2016 and now is the first woman to be nominated president in this election cycle.

Who Are the Current Women Candidates Who Ran in 2016?\(^{1}\)

Democrats: Hillary Clinton—(19)

\(^{1}\) The number next to each party in parentheses indicates the total number of candidates (men and women) running for 2016. This is subject to change as we get closer to the election. At the time of this writing, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton lost in the Electoral College vote, but did win by a slim margin in the popular vote (November, 2016).
Republicans: Carly Fiorina; Shawna Sterling—(38)
Independent: Samm Tittle; Lynn Sandra Kahn; and Tami Stainfield—(21)
Green Party: Jill Stein—(1)
Libertarian: Joy Waymire—(6)

Conclusion

In this historical investigation of women who sought after the presidency, from the first candidate of Victoria Woodhull in the 1870's to the myriad individuals who are in the running in 2016, it is clear that women possess the character, leadership qualities, and acumen to achieve this goal in the United States. It remains to be seen if a female candidate will reach the office of the presidency in 2020 and beyond.

References