

Confidence. Courage. Discipline.

We call America "land of the free", a place where dreams come true, and discrimination is only found in history books. Would you agree with this? For years people everywhere fled their homes in search of freedom and more opportunities, but only a select few benefited. We have come a long way since the nineteenth century. Women are disadvantaged in many ways, but perhaps one of the most influential in both sport and society is how they display their emotions. Before Title IX was passed in 1972, only 1 out of 27 high school girls participated in sports. Today, 1 out of 2.5 high school girls plays organized athletics.

My favorite female athlete is Serena Williams. She worked diligently since she was five years old to achieve Olympic medals. Even if it meant playing in her sisters' shadows at first. Trust being the younger sibling, I completely understand. I admire the drive Serena had to never be ok with just winning once. In her career she won many titles. Serena's legacy was not only defined by that. At the US Open, a brief look at the number of African American fans present underlines how her success has affected who watches, participates, and claims it as their own. When you walk around the grounds now, versus 25 years ago, it looks totally different. I don't think Arthur Ashe had this kind of impact and he was a man. Serena and her older sister Venus really changed who comes to watch tennis and who plays. That's a big legacy right there. Years from now a little African American girl can one day make their dream become a reality because of the groundwork she has set forth.

We are all dominated by ideas of toxic masculinity, that is, that males must be competitive, aggressive, suppress their emotion and hold overall power. This is not only reflected in our general society, but in sport as well, particularly professional tennis. Do you know how

Serena was treated because she was stronger, had more power, her body shape, you name it? If she showed any form of aggression or emotion, she was ridiculed. Yet, she still prevailed.

I respect Serena for her dedication to the game. She didn't feel limited to her gender and took that extra step to become a top athlete despite the prominent differences between the sexes. Serena has contributed much more than her talent and athletic appeal. She has altered the views upon the roles of women in sports and has encouraged many others to join in the battle of the sexes and make a difference.

Although, we are moving closer to true gender equality, gender discrimination is still rampant in our society. Sports are a very important part of the American society. Within sports heroes are made, goals are set, and dreams are lived. Years after this grand farewell is complete, more will follow. Will your great granddaughter be the next Serena Williams.... because of her she has a fighting chance.