

# THE FORUM

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## 100 years in the making: The fight to vote still exists, activists say

Brendan Sudberry, September 21, 2020

Women gained the right to vote in 1920 through the 19th Amendment. However, the fight for the ability to vote by women of color continued for nearly five additional decades – with many still struggling to freely exercise that right today.

The recent unveiling of a mural commemorating the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment in downtown Salt Lake City was intended to celebrate the influential work of women throughout Utah's history. Instead, many have criticized the mural for its lack of political representation.



Former Rep. Mia Love took to Twitter, questioning why more Republican women were not included. Others wondered why more women of color were not added.

Katie Valdez, a senior justice studies major and the former co-president of the Westminster College Feminist Club, had a different perception of the mural.

"I don't mean to sound callous, but I don't give a damn about the mural," Valdez said. "I'm sorry if that sounds really negative, but in a state where we have a really terrible track record on women's equality and enfranchisement, I don't see the mural as important at all. The mural being there is more of a slap in the face than anything else."

Because of the historically disproportionate treatment of women throughout the state's history, Valdez said this seems to be a Band-Aid on a problem that needs

stitches.

WalletHub recently published its annual survey on the “Best & Worst States for Women’s Equality,” ranking Utah last among all 50 states. The findings were based on workplace environment, education, health and political empowerment – mirroring Valdez’s points.

“I think that where we’re at now is important to contextualize in a long and ongoing history of settler colonialism,” Valdez said. “That’s where all these gender roles came from in the first place. They are colonial impositions.”

Valdez said she does not see this situation improving for women in Utah, the U.S. or around the globe.

“I think that we’re going to continue to see it,” she said. “Honestly, as long as we continue to allow this social order to exist, oppression is going to exist, and women’s oppression along with that.”