

essays

Toward a Repeal of the 19th Amendment: After Emma Goldman's "Woman Suffrage"

"We boast today of the age of advancement, of science, and progress. Is it not strange, then, that we still believe in fetish worship?" These words—mostly original—open Emma Goldman's 1917 essay, "Woman Suffrage." The essay was based on a speech she delivered across the nation in advance of the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, which ended the suffragists seventy-two year battle securing some women the right to vote in democratic elections. "True," Goldman continues, "our fetishes have different form and substance, yet in their power over the human mind they are still as disastrous as were those of old. Our modern fetish is universal suffrage. Those who have not yet achieved that goal fight bloody revolutions to obtain it. Woe to the heretic who dare question that divinity!" One hundred years later, the right to vote has been guaranteed, but only to those women capable of undergoing an increasingly complex registration process, who have a mailing address, and can offer proof of citizenship and/or picture ID, but have no criminal record. Little else, many argue, has changed in the last century.

What I offer you today is an updated version of Goldman's essay. I will not attribute her words, only adapt them, because her arguments are worth hearing as cleanly as possible, and because mine, with little shift, are reflected therein.

Originally performed at America/n with art collective Lucky Pierre on Election Day, 2012. To be released as a limited edition book on Inauguration Day, 2013. [Listen to the whole thing, with contributions from Milton Friedman's 1980 PBS special *Free to Choose*, here.](#)