

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN CITY PROPERTY

A GENDER ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC ART, STREETS, BUILDINGS, AND PARKS

December 2020



City and County of San Francisco
London N. Breed
Mayor

Department on the Status of Women
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Director



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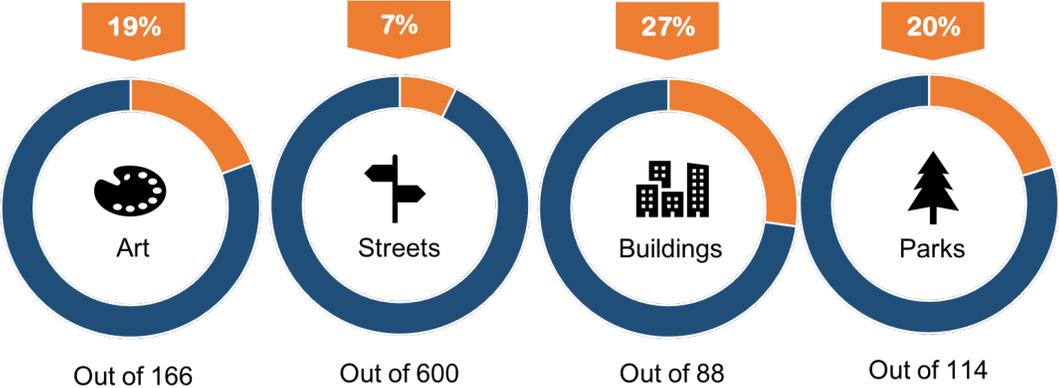
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2018, the Board of Supervisors passed, and Mayor London N. Breed signed, [Ordinance 243-18](#) (“the Ordinance”) to expand the extent to which women are represented and commemorated in the public sphere, including in artwork, statues, street names, facilities, parks, and more. It establishes a City policy which states that at least 30 percent of historic figures depicted or recognized in the public sphere be women. This level of representation is important because studies suggest that 30 percent is the proportion at which critical mass is reached so that a member of an underrepresented community is no longer seen as a token but can influence organizational culture and decision-making.ⁱ

The Ordinance sets forth the effort to increase women’s representation with a work of public art depicting Maya Angelou, an American poet, civil rights activist, and San Francisco’s first female cable car operator, to be installed in front of the Main Library by December 31, 2020. Lava Thomas, a Bay Area multidisciplinary artist who tackles issues of race, gender, representation, and memorialization, was commissioned to create the piece of art depicting Maya Angelou. However, the artist’s selection was initially blocked and then later approved by the Arts Commission in a controversial process. At this time, the artwork will not be installed by the deadline and the timeline for completion is unknown.

The Ordinance also created a fund to accept gifts for the design, construction, repair, and maintenance of public art depicting historic women. The Ordinance further requires the Department on the Status of Women to, from 2020 on, report on the representation of women depicted in public art and on public property biennially. This is the second year of this report.

As we learn more about the data, some changes have been made to the analysis to better capture the representation of women. This includes expanding the public art category beyond the Arts Commission collection and incorporating buildings and other features named for both men and women into the overall data. Although these changes affected the proportion of women depicted or named in individual categories, the overall representation of women in City property remains at 12 percent. The 2019 report found 9 percent women’s representation in public art, 7 percent of street names, 14 percent of buildings, and 22 percent of parks. For 2020, the proportion of nonfictional women recognized in public property is the following:



The full report and initial 2019 report are available at the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women website, <https://sfgov.org/dosw/gender-analysis-reports>.

INTRODUCTION

Public art and other representations of individuals on City property serve as a vehicle to recognize people who have significantly contributed to society. The United States has less than 400 statues depicting real historic women.ⁱⁱ Generally, statues tend to portray war heroes or elected officials, who are overwhelmingly White men. When women are portrayed in statues, they are often hypersexualized, fictional characters, or a means to carry a metaphor, such as Lady Liberty.

Today, women have accomplished an extensive array of achievements and hold more positions of power than ever. Regardless, recognition of women in the public sphere is disproportionate. Recent efforts to change this underrepresentation of women were catalyzed by the Empowerment 2020 movement led by former US Treasurer Rosie Rios, known for initiating the process to feature a woman on US currency. Empowerment 2020’s efforts also extended to women’s representation in education and statues.

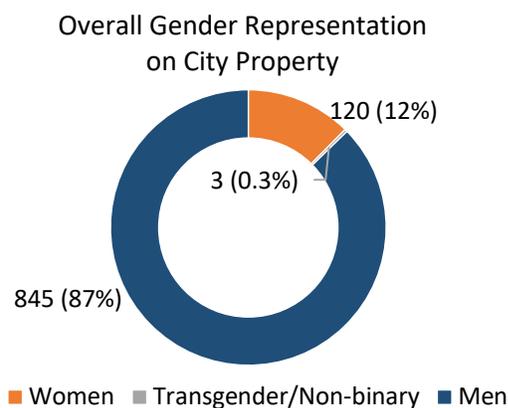
This movement inspired several US cities to take action. New York City previously had five statues depicting historic women.ⁱⁱⁱ This year, New York City unveiled three new statues of women, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, and Susan B. Anthony, in Central Park. New York City has plans for dozens more statues to come, including a statue of the late US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.



Representation is important. Psychologists, such as Albert Bandura, suggest that at early stages of development we tend to perform observational learning: the idea that we imitate what we see. If women and girls do not see accomplished women honored in their cities as much as men do, they may be at danger of asking themselves: “Are women even capable of accomplishing great things?” This in turn may limit their aspirations and the fields young women enter, like science, politics, and business.

With the passage of [Ordinance 243-18](#),

San Francisco similarly hopes to increase the representation of women in the public sphere, by breaking what some call the “bronze ceiling.” The Ordinance also requires regular reporting by the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women of the progress to reach 30 percent women’s representation in public art, street names, buildings, and parks. This report is the second such report following the initial benchmarking report issued in December 2019.



Although there have been some changes to the proportion of women depicted or named in individual categories, the overall representation of women in City property has not increased. As of December 2020, the overall representation of women in City property averages to 12 percent, well below the Ordinance’s 30 percent goal, with street names and public art requiring the most attention. This year, there were a total of 968 representations or depictions of historic figures on City property reported to our Department, 120 representing women, 845 of men, and 3 of transgender and non-binary individuals, including one transgender woman and one transgender man.

METHODOLOGY

City departments provided the data for this report as required by Ordinance 243-18, including the Arts Commission, the City Administrator, Public Works, and the Recreation and Parks Department. Departments compiled a list of historic figures depicted or recognized by name in properties under their jurisdiction. Artwork in museums and spaces requiring an admission fee were excluded per the Ordinance. Data that was posted on each Departments' website or received by the Department on the Status of Women by November 1, 2020 was included in this report. Additionally, supplementary data was provided by the Port of San Francisco, the San Francisco International Airport, the San Francisco Public Library, and the Department on the Status of Women.

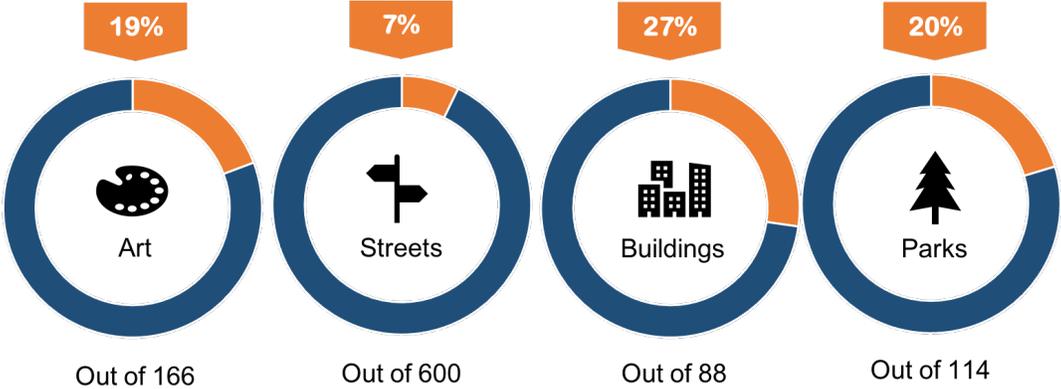
The objective of this analysis is to measure the current proportion of public property depicting or recognizing nonfictional historic women and to monitor progress towards the City's goal of reaching at least 30 percent representation of women in City property. This report highlights the importance of the representation and commemoration of women. It also serves to measure gender equity in the public sphere and to inform future naming decisions and depictions of historic people.

This is the second report of its kind and, since the previous year, there have been some updates in the method of analysis and categorization of the data. Each subsection of City property (public art, streets, buildings, and parks) now includes data from multiple City departments. Any public art, streets, buildings, or parks that depict or recognize more than one person were counted as collectively representing either women or men. In the case that both women and men were featured, it was included in each category, once to represent women and once to represent men, rather than being counted in their own category. Additionally, the method for establishing whether an aspect of City property depicts a nonfictional figure has been adapted to include public art figuratively depicting a historical group of people, that does not identify specific individuals (i.e., Comfort Women, Holocaust Survivors, Volunteer Firefighters). This change reflects the intention of the Ordinance to increase the visibility of women and their contributions to society.

In this report, the terms women and men are used as identifiers which encompass the social, institutional, and cultural roles and responsibilities of women and men, regardless of their sex assigned at birth. It is important to acknowledge that these definitions of gender identity may not be fully representative of the gender identities of San Franciscans and others throughout history. However, when known, transgender and gender expansive identities were included.

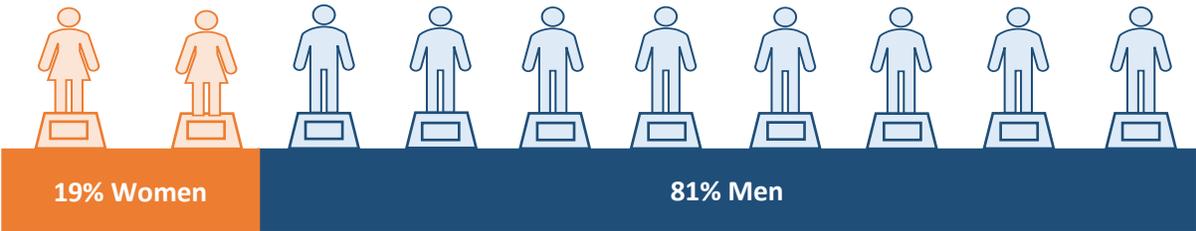
FINDINGS

Based on the data gathered, the results of the analysis of the representation of women in City property, including public art, street names, buildings and other facilities, and parks and open spaces are the following:



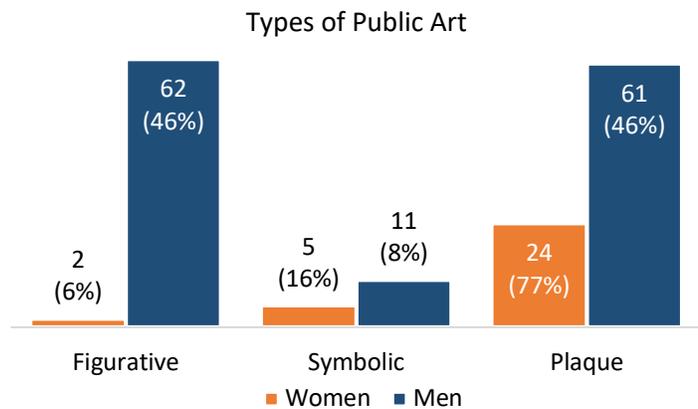
Public art is comprised of 166 pieces, 19 percent of which depicts or represents women, including sculptures, monuments, and plaques. City streets are currently the furthest from the City’s goal, at seven percent, 23 percentage points away. Buildings are the closest to the City’s goal, only three percentage points away, however, it is also the smallest category. Buildings include City property recognizing nonfictional figures such as buildings, rooms, facilities, and other fully enclosed structures. The category parks included outdoor spaces open to the public such as parks, playgrounds, other features within parks, and some non-green open spaces. In all of these categories, it is common that the individuals featured, either by name or figuratively, were involved in funding or donating to that feature or the City more broadly. Each of these categories is discussed in more detail in the subsequent sections.

PUBLIC ART



Public art refers to all permanently sited works of art in public spaces, including sculptural monuments, memorials, benches, gates, or plaques. In total, there are 166 artworks depicting or recognizing historic individuals, 81 percent represent men (134), 19 percent women (31), and one percent non-binary (1). This category is 11 percentage points behind the Ordinance’s 30 percent goal. This would require the addition of 26 monuments named after or depicting historic women. The large change from 2019, when 9 percent of public art represented women, is because this year’s data incorporates public art from all City departments and includes additional figurative depictions recognizing historical people (i.e., Comfort Women, Holocaust Survivors, Volunteer Firefighters).

Public works of art include depictions of nonfictional historic individuals through three-dimensional figures that honor a real person in their likeness or represent them through symbolic artwork or a plaque. Out of 31 pieces representing women, two are figurative depictions and five are symbolic depictions that name a historic woman or group of women. Meanwhile, twenty-four (77 percent) works of public art that recognizes historic women, are plaques. In contrast to the works of art which feature women, those of men are far more often (46 percent) figurative depictions of that specific individual. Men are also commonly found on plaques around the City.



The data for this section comes from the Arts Commission, the Recreation and Parks Department, and the Port of San Francisco. The table below shows the breakdown of public art by City department.

Public Art by City Department

Department	Public Art Pieces	Women	Precent Women
Arts Commission	83	10	12%
Rec and Park ¹	32	8	25%
Port	15	1	7%
Public Works	36	12	33%
Total	166	31	19%

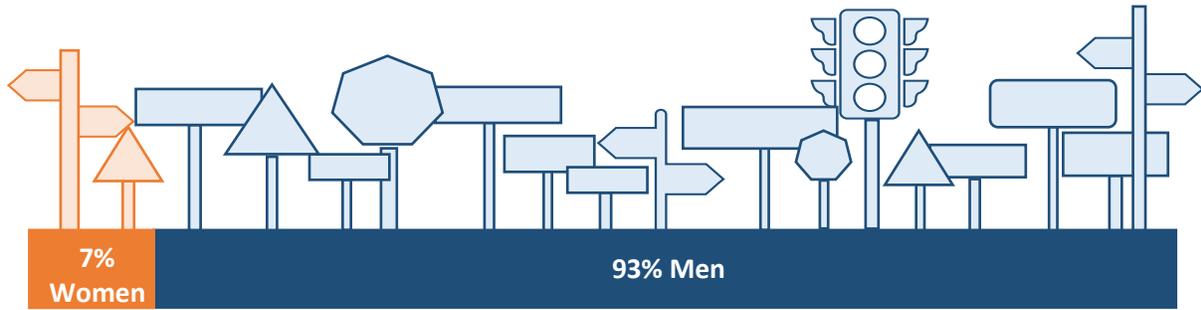
Although Public Works did not report information on art, they are listed for the Rainbow Honor Walk, located in San Francisco’s Castro neighborhood. A nonprofit organization of the same name selected the honorees and funded the creation of the plaques that were approved by the Arts Commission and installed in the sidewalk by Public Works, who also has a role in maintaining them. This landmark features portraits and descriptions of 36 pioneers of the LGBTQ+ community who have contributed to society in a variety of fields. Thirty-three percent of the honorees identify as women (12), including Christine Jorgensen who one of the first people in the US widely known to have sex reassignment surgery, and 64 percent identify as men (23), including Lou Sullivan another transgender pioneer.² One honoree identified as non-binary, We’wha, a famous Two-Spirit Zuni advocate.^{iv}

Additionally, the data lacks two-dimensional works of art, such as murals, paintings, and mosaics. Hopefully these will be included in future updates to this report to allow for a more comprehensive picture of who is represented in public art. Despite the underrepresentation of women depicted in works of public art, the Arts Commission has made a significant effort towards supporting gender equality in the arts by awarding 50 percent of its commissions to female artists.

¹ Rec and Park reported a number of statues also reported by the Arts Commission. As to not duplicate data, these pieces of public art are only listed under the Arts Commission.

² Classified by gender for each honoree’s self-identified gender.

STREET NAMES



The representation of women in San Francisco’s street names includes all officially valid avenues, streets, drives, ways, lanes, courts, places, and roads reported by Public Works and the Recreation and Parks Department. Out of the 600 streets named after historic individuals, 93 percent of streets are named for men (557) and 7 percent are named for women (43). This category is 23 percentage points behind the Ordinance’s 30 percent goal. This would require the naming of approximately 200 streets for women.

Location of San Francisco Streets Named for Women

Zip Code/Neighborhood	Number of Streets	Map of Streets Named After Women
94124: Bayview-Hunters Point	12	
94132: Lake Merced	7	
94109: Russian Hill/ Polk (Nob Hill)	3	
94103: South of Market	2	
94112: Ingleside-Excelsior/ Crocker-Amazon	2	
94115: Western Addition/ Japan Town	2	
94127: West Portal/ St. Francis Wood/ Miraloma	2	
94131: Twin Peaks/ Glen Park	2	
94102: Hayes Valley/ Tenderloin/ North of Market	1	
94107: South Park/ SOMA	1	
94117: Haight-Ashbury	1	
94118: Inner Richmond (Golden Gate Park)	1	
94121: Outer Richmond (Golden Gate Park)	1	
94134: Visitation Valley/ Sunnysdale	1	

Legend • Street Named After a Nonfictional Woman

Of the existing 43 streets named after historic women in San Francisco, the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood has the most. Ten out of 12 of these streets in the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood are named after racially diverse activists who sought to make Bayview-Hunters Point a better place. For example, the “Big 5,” a group of local African American women advocates from the 1960s, Julia Commer, Osceola Washington, Elouise Westbrook, Bertha Freeman, and Beatrice Dunbar.

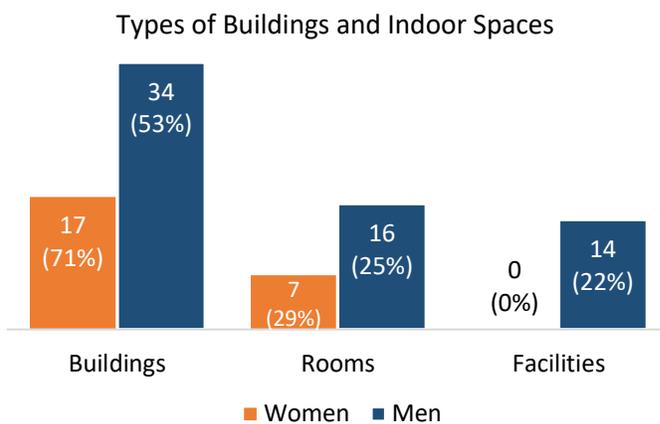
Lake Merced, located near San Francisco State University and the surrounding student housing, has the second most streets named after historic women. Four out of seven of these streets, which surround a roundabout, are named after members of the Juan Bautista de Anza expedition to San Francisco during

1775-1776, including Juan Bautista de Anza’s wife, Juana Cardenas. University and college campuses are a hub for more diverse street names. In 2018, a street near the City College of San Francisco campus was renamed Frida Kahlo Way. Additionally, most streets named after women in the Bayview-Hunters Point and Lake Merced neighborhoods are in very close proximity to one another, as mapped above.

BUILDINGS



The representation of women in City-owned buildings includes buildings, clubhouses, museums, recreation centers, community rooms, auditoriums, terminals, departure halls,³ staircases, rooms, and other enclosed places open to the public. The data provided does not include conference rooms, which the Ordinance calls for but were not available in time for this report. There are 88 City-owned buildings and other spaces named after nonfictional individuals, of which 73 percent (64) are named after men and 27 percent (24) are named after women. This category is three percentage points behind the Ordinance’s 30 percent goal. This would require the addition of 4 buildings or other spaces named after women.



Of the 24 City-owned properties and other indoor spaces named after women, 71 percent (17) are buildings, 29 percent (7) are rooms, and zero percent are facilities. City-owned properties named after men, on the other hand, are 53 percent (34) buildings, 25 percent (16) rooms, and 22 percent (14) facilities. Facilities, comprising spaces at which City employees work that are often far removed from larger crowds and have limited accessibility to the public, were all named after men. This lack of

representation of women in City facilities could set an unwelcoming tone, as many of these facilities house sectors of public employment which are overwhelmingly comprised of men, such as public transportation, sanitary engineering, construction, and first responders.

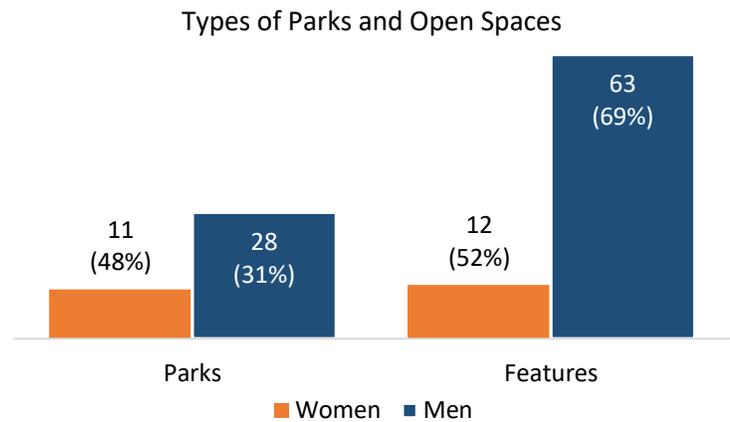
³ Does not include spaces beyond the airport security check point.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

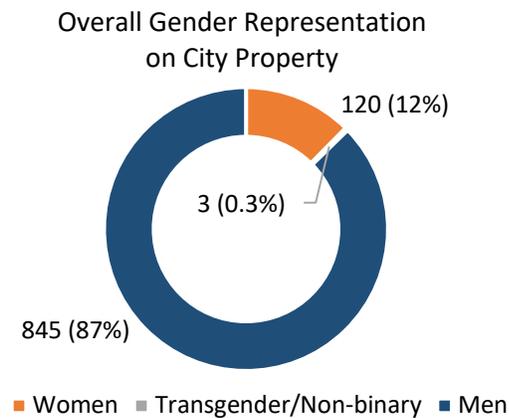


The representation of women in parks and open spaces includes public park sites, hills, gardens, playgrounds, tennis courts, squares, groves, yacht harbors, piazzas, golf courses, trees, and plazas. In total, under this category there are 114 outdoor spaces named for historical individuals, with men comprising 80 percent (91) and women comprising 20 percent (23). This category is 10 percentage points behind the Ordinance’s 30 percent goal of representation of women in the naming of public parks and open spaces. This would require the addition of 16 spaces named after women. Parks had a slight decrease in the representation of women from the previous year’s report, when 22 percent of parks represented women. This change is due to a few items, which were previously counted as parks, being moved to public art, such as benches, gates, plaques and other sculptural pieces found in City parks.

Of the 23 parks and open spaces which represent women, 48 percent (11) are parks and other outdoor spaces, and 52 percent (12) are features found within another park. Parks and open spaces named after men are 31 percent (28) parks and other outdoor spaces and 69 percent (63) are features found within another park. The category of parks included anything from mini-parks to some of San Francisco’s largest open spaces. Seven of the eleven parks named after women are two acres or less.



CONCLUSION



The overall representation of women in City property is 12 percent, 18 percentage points below the Ordinance’s 30 percent goal. Street names are the area with the smallest percentage of women represented, thus requiring the most attention to achieve the City’s goal. In order to create diverse representation across all of San Francisco, the location of City streets named after women should be considered. For public art, it is important to increase art that figuratively depicts women, as there are currently only two such artworks in San Francisco. It is also key to expand the number of City facilities that are named after women, which may encourage women to participate in male-dominated fields.

The overall representation of women in City property has not increased since last year. The change in representation in each subsection is due to improved methods of analysis and categorization. There were a total of 968 representations or depictions of historic figures on City property, 120 representing women, 845 of men, and three transgender and non-binary individuals, including one transgender woman and one transgender man. Future reports should include additional forms of art as well as conference rooms, which were not available at the time of data collection.

Local efforts to increase women’s representation in public art are underway with the creation of the artistic depiction of Maya Angelou that will be installed in front of the San Francisco Main Library. Similarly, many organizations and individuals are rallying to rename spaces recognizing historic figures who committed atrocious actions and instead name them after some of the many diverse civic heroes. We hope this report encourages naming authorities to promote gender equity and other forms of diversity when deciding who to recognize in the future.

ⁱ “Critical Mass: The Impact of Three or More Women on Corporate Boards.” Konrad A.M., Kramer, V., & Erkut, S. (2008). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256923992_Critical_Mass_The_Impact_of_Three_or_More_Women_on_Corporate_Boards

ⁱⁱ “The US has fewer than 400 statues of women – but that’s changing.” Quartz. (2019). <https://qz.com/1732974/new-york-citys-central-park-will-get-its-first-statue-of-women/> and “Why the Dearth of Statues Honoring Women in Statuary Hall and Elsewhere.” Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Art Inventories Catalog, <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/women-in-wwi/smithsonian-american-art-museum-arts-inventories-catalog>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} “Transgender Spotlight: We’wha.” Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition. (2014). <https://www.masstpc.org/wewha/>