

When I was a young woman living in Ohio I was visited by an apparition. Name of Demosthenes. He said:

'Now, Victoria, I want you to pack up and leave Ohio and move to 17 Great Jones Street in New York City, and when you get there you will find fame and fortune and you will rule your people.'

I don't know how much you know about Ohio – but this sounded like a good idea. I packed up my sister, Tennessee Claflin, our mother, all our children, both our husbands and my lover, making this one of the first extended families. We all moved to 17 Great Jones Street in New York City. I considered 'Fame, fortune and ruling my people': I decided to work on fortune first and figured I could buy the other two.

This was about the time I met Cornelius Vanderbilt who was a full-time millionaire with interests in young ladies and psychic healers who could assure him health and longevity. My sister and I were able to fit that bill ...

Two years later we had enough money to open up our own office on Broad Street and become New York City's first female financiers. This was not an office in name only. One of our first investments was in the Harlem Railroad. Vanderbilt backed us and we made over \$500,000 from that deal alone.

So now I was famous and rich and next was to rule my people. How to become a politician.

There are just two things you have to do to be a politician.

First, you build a platform.

Second, you stand on it.

Now, a platform is made up of planks and my 1872 Planks included equal employment opportunity, excess profit taxes, better public housing, easier divorce laws, birth control, vegetarianism, the vote and shorter skirts.

Talking like this I made a few gentlemen nervous. So I said to them, 'Gentleman, I have been your friend, your lover, your companion and your business associate. I have been equal to you mentally, spiritually and physically. Why not let me become equal to you morally and politically?'

Pretty soon I was giving speeches all over New York. And soon it wasn't clear if I started changing what I was saying, or people started changing what they were hearing.

Hard to say with politicians. Here is a taste of one of my speeches.

'Women are the architects of the human race. Men are what their mothers make them. Women are entrusted with the most holy and vital duty of society: we bear, rear and educate men; we are the secret counselors, the best advisors, the most devoted aids in the most trying period of men's lives. Men trust us in the market, the shop, on the highway and the railroad ... but when we propose to carry a slip of paper with a name on it to the ballot box, they fear us.

What we ask, what we demand is equality everywhere. We plead no weakness on the grounds of sex. We demand the justice of equality on the ground of individuality - and require that this standard shall rule in state, church and society. If the loss of virginity is a disgrace to an unmarried woman, then the same should be held for an unmarried man. This is justice, not mercy, not charity ... this is equality.

The vice of government, the vice of religion, the vice of education is at one with that of private life: we do not hold each other sacred. The woman is for the man and not the two for each other. While such a state of affairs exists, there can be no peace and no permanent improvement. Women must come up or men must come down. Humanity will never grow or be understood, there will be no peace, no permanent improvement, until a woman is allowed to demonstrate what she is.

While others prayed for the good time coming, I worked for it. I therefore claim the right to speak for the unfranchised women of this country.

I am well aware that in evoking this position I shall evoke more ridicule than enthusiasm at the outset. But ... this is an epoch of sudden changes and startling surprises. What may appear absurd today will assume a more serious aspect tomorrow. We cannot hold back the rising tide of reform. The world moves.

I am placing myself before you of my own free will and, believing as I do that the prejudice against women in the public eye will soon disappear, I now announce myself as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States!

I spent election night in jail for exposing Henry Ward Beecher's known affair with another man's wife. I did not win the election. But someday a woman will. And when that happens – I will be there.

**Victoria Woodhull 1838-1927**

**Tulis McCall**