



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Women of Fierce Determination and Boundless Courage

Dear Friends,

I was raised by an extraordinary woman. My mother, Mollie, was a compassionate social worker, passionate advocate for inclusion and equality, and gracious friend. She taught me and my brothers so many lessons throughout our lives, but more than her words, her actions and her life inspired us daily. I am sure that each of you have stories to tell of the amazing women who shaped your lives.

In the midst of a very difficult year for our country — global pandemic, economic uncertainty, political divisions, racial injustice — I think it is important to celebrate and acknowledge the history-making, world-shaping women of 2020. As we mark the 100-year anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving women the right to vote, we stand on the precipice of a new moment in our nation.

Regardless of political perspective we can each acknowledge the extraordinary contributions of women to our national political milieu. As of the writing of this note, a black Asian woman, Kamala Harris, has been named Vice President-elect of the United States. Republican women have made extraordinary gains in the House of Representatives, with thirteen newly elected, non-incumbent women doubling the representation of Republican women in the House. Organizers and advocates like Stacey Abrams and Nikki Haley have had major impact on this election season. Sarah McBride becomes the first transgender woman in history elected to a state senate.

Let me be clear, women have been doing this work throughout the history of our nation. Last month, PSRC held an extraordinary event with the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia entitled, “When Women Lost the Right to Vote: A Revolutionary Story.” Between the years of 1776 and 1807, women and freed persons of color had voting rights in New Jersey before those rights were stripped away. The curator shared stories and showed voting records and poll lists from New Jersey, highlighting Abigail Adams’ letter to her husband in 1776, urging him to “remember the ladies!”

We also remember the contributions of abolitionists like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, civil rights icons like Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer, and trailblazing jurists like Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sandra Day O’Connor. We acknowledge Jeanette Rankin, the first female congresswoman elected in 1916 from Montana, four years before the passage of the 19th amendment. We remember other “firsts” like Patsy Mink, Shirley Chisolm, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Nancy Pelosi. We remember the women who chipped away at “that highest glass ceiling,” Geraldine Ferraro, Sarah Palin, and Hillary Clinton.

These women didn’t set out to be “first” or to become symbols of progress. They were extraordinary women who did exceptional things in their own right and they just happened to break boundaries that a male-dominant society constructed throughout our history. Condoleezza Rice, Former U.S. Secretary of State under President George W. Bush, once remarked: “I think the truth of the matter is, people who end up as ‘first’ don’t actually set out to be the first. They set out to do something they love and it just so happens that they are the first to do it.”

I am grateful for these exceptional women, and for the countless women who have done extraordinary





things far from the public eye. I am mindful that many of you, the women of PSRC and our communities, have your own stories and have shaped the world in your own ways. And I am thankful for my mother who modeled fierce determination and boundless courage. From the bottom of my heart, thank you all. Together, let's celebrate this historic moment in our country.

All the Best,  
*Drew A. Dyson, PhD*  
*Executive Director*