



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Senate Democratic Leader Stewart-Cousins's Remarks On Women's History Month

SENATOR ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS March 15, 2018

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“Every year there is a theme for Women’s History Month selected by the National Women’s History Project.

Last year it was ‘Honoring Trailblazing Women in Labor and Business,’ and this year our theme is ‘Nevertheless, She Persisted: Honoring Women Who Fight All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.’

This year's theme is especially significant given what we see happening in Washington with efforts to strip women's rights, and what's happening nationally with sexual harassment and assault survivors who are coming out of the shadows to share their stories and shine a light on this crisis.

I think of how many of us in this chamber, myself included, are here because we persisted and fought to earn our places.

Women's History Month gives us an opportunity to look back at women who inspired us through their actions, their dedication, and yes, their persistence.

Women who persisted like Ida B. Wells, born enslaved, freed after the Civil War, and became an investigative reporter who documented cases of lynchings in the 1890's, helped create the NAACP and organized for women's suffrage.

Women who persisted like Dolores Huerta, who fought for farmworkers in California and co-founded the National Farmworkers Association, which is now United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez.

Her rallying cry, 'Si Se Puede' still resonates today.

Women who persisted like tennis star Billie Jean King, who in the face of sexism, famously won the 'Battle of the Sexes' in 1973, showing the world women in sports were a force to be respected.

Contemporary women who persisted like Tarana Burke, whose compassion coined the phrase 'MeToo' in 2006, and because of her persistence, that movement has taken off.

Women who persist like Saru Jayaraman, who is leading the fight for tipped workers to get fair wages.

I have had the honor to stand with Saru and so many others who persist in this fight for economic justice, and I know we will succeed.

When you speak about women who persisted, you cannot forget Helen Keller, who was blind and deaf and in the face of unimaginable adversity graduated college and went on to become a prolific author and outspoken advocate for suffrage, social justice, and labor rights.

These, and the stories of so many incredible women are at the heart of Women's History Month.

Let us recommit to persisting in the face of sexism and persisting in the face of injustice

We owe it to our daughters and our granddaughters to show them that when women refuse to back down we can accomplish anything.

That's why, 'And yet she persisted' is a good thing because invariably it moves our society forward."