

What are chances of U.S. electing its 1st woman president?

Posted At : May 2, 2016 3:06 PM | Posted By : Mavis Carr

Related Categories: Government

By *Finé Thompson*

With the emergence of female head-of-state leadership around the world, a question arises: Why hasn't the United States elected a woman president? As a progressive world power, the United States has lagged behind other countries in its inclusion of women in positions of power.

This shortcoming was evident last winter.

On Jan. 16, Taiwan made history by electing its **first woman president**, Tsai Ing-Wen, a moderate representative of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). She won about 56 percent of the votes, effectively ending the eight-year rule of Taiwan's pro-China Nationalist Party.



Tsai accomplished this feat by vowing to invigorate Taiwan's sluggish economy by diversifying trade with other Asian countries and distinguishing Taiwan's identity from China. Tsai believes that although Taiwan's relationship with **mainland China** is strained, China must respect Taiwan's democracy and maintain the status quo.

Tsai has been described as a self-made woman, likened to prime ministers Margaret Thatcher of England and Angela Merkel of Germany.

Tsai has not only made history as Taiwan's first woman president, but she is also the first candidate to win the election without a political legacy. The Cornell University graduate joined the DPP in 2004, becoming the party's chairwoman by 2008. She ran for president in 2012 only to lose and resign as the DPP's chairwoman until 2014. After reclaiming her position, Tsai made a second, ultimately successful, bid for the presidency.

Taiwan, for the most part, has welcomed Tsai's election with open arms. Her moderate but firm political standing shows that she is a competent negotiator. Many Taiwanese citizens are also eager to see progress for the country's LGBT rights. Overall, the island's younger generation of voters are excited at the prospect of having a woman leader.

Taiwan is not the only country to welcome women leaders. An increasing number of countries around the world are electing women as leaders. In fact, 35 countries have had women presidents while 42 countries have had women prime ministers.

Hampton University senior Arielle Lewis, a criminal justice major from Philadelphia, believes that the United States' hesitation to elect a woman president stems from deep-rooted sexism and patriarchy. "We would like to think that women can do everything that men can do, but we live in a culture where that doesn't seem like a possibility," she said. "In our culture women are given the secondary role while in other countries and cultures women are given primary roles."

Women have been running for U.S. president since 1872, however none of their campaigns were substantial enough to result in an election. Also, many of the women who have run for president in the United States have run as third-party candidates, including notables Victoria Woodhull, and Jill Stein.

Woodhull of New York is documented as the first woman to run for president, running 50 years before the 19th Amendment allowed women to vote. Her historic campaign took place during the 1872 election where she campaigned for women's suffrage, political reform, civil rights and social welfare. Woodhull even nominated Frederick Douglass as her running mate, making him the first African-American ever nominated for vice president. Although her campaign was not successful, Woodhull was a catalyst that inspired more women to seek positions of power in the American government.

"I didn't even know that the first woman to run for president ran in the 1800s," said Dominique Parrish, a junior, fine arts major from Christopher Newport University. "That isn't something that they taught us in school."

Stein's 2012 presidential campaign was largely overlooked. However, ultimately her candidacy was the most successful campaign ever conducted by a woman. Stein ran in the 2012 election as a representative for the Green Party. The environmental health physician's campaign emphasized green jobs and environmental protections. Jill Stein only managed to receive .36 of 1 percent of the popular vote, yet her campaign is considered a milestone.

While female candidates have run as third party candidates, a handful sought nominations for major political parties. **Shirley Chisholm**, who ran for the Democratic nomination in 1972, was the most viable woman candidate for the Democratic nomination until Hillary Clinton. Chisholm made history as being the first woman to have her name placed in the nomination for president at the Democratic National Convention and being the first African American to be on the ballot as a candidate for president. She focused on equal rights and economic justice although her campaign struggled due to being disorganized and underfunded.

While Chisholm ultimately did not receive the Democratic Party nomination, she was able to win 152 delegates at the 1972 Democratic National Convention.

Clinton, by far, has had the most **substantial female campaign** for presidency in American history. She has a substantial political background which includes a law degree from Yale University, serving as first lady from 1993 to 2001, serving as a U.S. senator from New York from 2001 to 2009, and serving as secretary of state from 2009 to 2013.

Clinton first announced her plans to run for presidency in 2007 and was a frontrunner to win the 2008 Democratic nomination until her campaign was blindsided by U.S. Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois. After much speculation, Clinton announced that she would again be running for the Democratic presidential nomination in the 2016 elections. The former secretary of state is considered the front runner against U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

As of April 28, Clinton had 1,662 of 2,383 delegates needed for the Democratic nomination according to projects.fivethirtyeight.com. If she can maintain her lead, Clinton will be one step closer to possibly being the first woman president of the United States.

*The writer is a student in the **Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications**.*