Voting, a vital part of citizenship in the United States, is how we elect who we believe has our best interests in mind. There are three amendments to the Constitution that establish the right to vote for all adults regardless of race, sex, and age. These amendments can, however, leave gaps that allow for unfairness when people are exercising their right to vote.

Passed in 1870, the right to vote regardless of “color, race, or previous condition

of servitude” [1] can be found in Section 1 of the 15th Amendment. My Chinese ancestors wouldn’t have been able to vote until this amendment was passed. This right allowed for people of any race or skin color to vote, as well as the formorly enslaved. Also, even if you were a slave in the past, you could vote. While this amendment made all men eligible to vote, it left open the opportunity for unfairness. This included poll

taxes and literacy tests [2]. I believe the individual responsibility that comes with this right is to make voting accessible to everyone, including people of color. 19.5% of Black people are below the poverty line, with Hispanics at 17%, and Asians at 8.1% [3], which could make it harder to commute a long distance to a polling place. After all, if you are allowed to vote but can’t, what good does this amendment really do?

It was another 50 years before the 19th Amendment was ratified, giving women

the right to vote. At the time, in 1920, women were not seen as equals to men. Many women followed their husbands’ lead and let them make the decisions. As a female, my responsibility when I can vote will be to not let other people tell me who I should vote for. By voting for who I believe is the best choice, I am not placing myself below men like women did in the past.

51 years after this, in 1971, the 26th Amendment was ratified. Found in Section 1 of the 26th Amendment is the right to vote at 18 years of age. Before this time, men were drafted in wars, but they were seen as too irresponsible to vote. When I turn eighteen, my responsibility will be to stay educated on current politics so I know who I want to vote for. If I am not informed about the issues that affect me, how will I know which candidate wants to help with these issues?

In conclusion, it took over 100 years for these three amendments to be ratified,

but to this day, unfairness persists. As a female of Chinese descent who will turn 18 in a few years, these amendments affect me in many ways. To realize the full potential of these rights, my generation needs to take on the individual responsibilities of increasing access to vote, having confidence in your vote, and making an educated vote.

References

[1] The US Constitution, Section 1 of the 15th Amendment, passed by Congress

February 26, 1869. Ratified February 3, 1870.

[2][https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/CivilWarAme](https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/CivilWarAmendments.htm)

[ndments.htm](https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/CivilWarAmendments.htm)

[3] <https://www.statista.com/statistics/200476/us-poverty-rate-by-ethnic-group/>