

We Are America

What does it mean to be an American woman in 2016? Each of the women on the next 50 pages has her own glorious, gutsy, utterly unique answer. And they'll define *themselves*, thanks.

Women rule. Figuratively (they don't call her Queen Bey for nothing) and literally (a record number now serve in Congress). It's shaping up to be the Year of the Woman at the Olympics too, with more female athletes competing than ever before in Rio. Zika be damned.

Yes, women have come a long way over the past several decades. (So has this magazine: The September 1956 issue said, we regret to quote, "A woman can't make a million dollars." Oh, and this: "Ambition is an admirable thing in a young man.... But just try ambitious in front of the word *woman*. And what do you see? A grim, single-minded dame with a ride-hard compulsion." Shivers.)

Today young women are more educated, more racially diverse (with 43 percent now identifying as nonwhite), and,

in a big middle finger to the persistent wage gap, more affluent. We're also more giving than past generations (84 percent of working millennials donated to charity in 2014); unabashedly more feminist (seven in 10 now say that's an empowering word); and more tolerant (68 percent support gay marriage, up from 44 percent in 2004).

More. Women are now *more*: more confident, more inclusive, more *all* the things women probably always wanted to be, except fools blocked their way and stereotypes held them back. And despite the still-challenging world we live in, we are also now more hopeful about our power to make change happen.

The truth is, there is no one "American woman"; we are many. Turn the page. Check us—you!—out. Aren't we awesome?

“Fana Minea Tesfagiorgis is an artist, teacher, writer, and lover of God, life, and freedom.”

—Tefagiorgis, 28, is—like all the women in this photo—a dancer with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Photographed by Miguel Reveriego in a Tibi coat, an Olivia von Halle dress, Jennifer Fisher earrings, a Sherry Accessories belt, and Dolce & Gabbana boots.

“Samantha Figgins is a dancer with nothing to prove and everything to share.”

—Figgins, 27

In a Maison Margiela coat and dress, a Sherry Accessories belt, and Alexander Wang boots.

“Jacqueline Green is a daughter of a single mother of five; a people watcher and sympathizer; a huge lover of black history; and an overall black girl who rocks.”

—Green, 26

In Haider Ackermann clothing and Louis Vuitton boots.

“Constance Stamatiou is a real dance mom who came out of retirement to prove to herself that even with a family and a different body, she could be better than she was before.”

—Stamatiou, 32 (here with son Thanos, two)

In Burberry clothing and boots.

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