

**VICTORIA WOODHULL**  
**Episode #7 Transcript**  
Written by Gabrielle Mirabella  
Music by Ernie Bird

**GABRIELLE:** Hey everyone, Gabrielle Mirabella here! On behalf of myself and Ernie Bird, we are thrilled to introduce a new series of episodes called “Bite-Sized Biographies”. These mini episodes take you through the *entire* life of one historical woman in just three short acts. Bite-sized Bios are perfect for bedtime, car rides, or anytime you’re waiting for the next full-length episode to arrive.

We also want to give a shout-out to our fabulous sponsors. Your generous donations go directly towards the musical theatre artists you hear on our program.

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*INTRO MUSIC.*

**GABRIELLE:** Hello! And welcome to a bite-sized episode of “What *will* she do next?”

I’m your host Gabrielle Mirabella and together with composer Ernie Bird, (**ERNIE:** Faster.) we’ve created a podcast that celebrates some of our *favorite* historical women!

**ERNIE:** Hurry up!

**GABRIELLE:** On today’s episode we take a *brief* look at the life of Victoria Woodhull; America’s first woman stockbroker, the first woman to address Congress, and the first woman to run for President of the United States.

**ERNIE:** *Ahh!*

**GABRIELLE:** This episode was written & narrated by myself with music & Production by Ernie Bird!

**ERNIE:** Times up!

**GABRIELLE & ERNIE:** Enjoy!

*THEME SONG PLAYS:*

*“What will she do next?  
What will she do next?  
Her aim is true but will she see it through?”*

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*Oh, what will she do... next?"*

**GABRIELLE:** Victoria Woodhull was born in the rural town of Homer, Ohio on September 23rd, 1838. One of many siblings, Victoria stood out as a bright and gifted child. Despite her family's extreme poverty, and only three years of elementary education, Victoria knew she was meant to do something great. For deep inside her, Victoria wrote, lived an encouraging inner-voice, one that would guide her throughout the rest of her life.

As special as Victoria was, growing up in Ohio was difficult. Her father, "Buck" Claflin, was unable to support the family, and her Mother was often quite ill. But, with the help of little sister Tennessee, also known as "Tennie", the two sisters began earning money by becoming, "clairvoyants", individuals who communicate with the spirit world.

Many of Victoria's customers were young women, just like her, oftentimes stuck in painful and sometimes dangerous marriages. Marriage in the nineteenth century was quite different than it is now; a married woman had no rights at all, not to her money, her property, or even her children. And, divorce, the ability to end a marriage, was near impossible. And, at the age of fifteen, Victoria herself was married to Canning Woodhull. A self-described lawyer who had moved west, searching for gold. But, just like the women who came seeking her advice, Victoria soon found *herself* deeply unhappy, after it was revealed that Canning was not a lawyer, and had no means to support the young couple.

In 1854, Victoria decided to take charge of her family's future. And, at sixteen years old she moved herself, Canning and baby son, Byron to California, seeking work. Victoria tried various positions such as domestic work and teaching, and at one point even taking to the stage as an actor! But, again, the voice which had guided her since childhood, returned. "Go home." they said. "Go home to your sister." Victoria rushed the family back to Ohio where she was reunited with Tennie.

On April 12th, 1861, when Victoria was 22 years old, the U.S. was in a great discord. Civil war had begun between the northern and southern states, and a painful divide was spreading throughout the country. During this time Victoria and Tennie's clairvoyant skills were in great demand, as families were torn apart. Then, four years later, on April 9, 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered his forces to Union General Ulysses S. Grant, ending the war and ending slavery for African-American people in the United States.

As the country was rebuilding, so was Victoria. Victoria and Canning both agreed they should end their marriage, and soon after Victoria met a man named Colonel James Harvey Blood. They were married in 1866 in Dayton, Ohio. The pair were deeply in love and the Colonel

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marveled at Victoria's independent spirit. And, hoping to encourage her further, the Colonel introduced Victoria to the American Women's Rights Movement.

Starting with the first women's rights gathering in Seneca Falls, NY, the voices of American women were slowly, but steadily, making themselves heard. Leaders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony declared equal rights for women! Rights to property, rights to divorce and most importantly, the right to vote. Inspired, Victoria moved the family, now including young daughter Zula, to New York City.

It was here in Manhattan that Victoria and Tennie were first introduced to finance. With their ability to listen, communicate and learn quickly, the two women soon created a Stock Brokerage firm, a place where people go to grow their money in the stock market. Visitors pressed their faces against the glass doors of *Woodhull, Claflin & Co.*, hoping to catch a glimpse of the sisters at work. Public interest was high, and their business was booming.

But, even with her great financial success, Victoria wanted to do more. The women who sought help during her clairvoyant days continued to call for her. They called for her to make change, to make life easier and safer for women. And, in order to do that, Victoria had to do something huge, something unheard of, something that was bound to gain attention. So, in 1870, at the age of thirty-two years old, Victoria Woodhull declared *herself* as a candidate for Presidency of the United States of America.

*TRANSITION MUSIC.*

**GABRIELLE:** Victoria Woodhull may have been too young, she may have had no political experience, and she may not even have had the right to vote, but nonetheless, she began her Presidential campaign, proclaiming:

*"While others of my sex devoted themselves to a crusade against the laws that shackle the women of this country, I asserted my independence. While others prayed for the good time coming, I worked for it. While others argued the equality of woman with man, I proved it by successfully engaging business. I therefore claim the right to speak for the women of the country and believe as I do that the prejudices which still exist against women in public life will soon disappear. I now announce myself as candidate for the Presidency."*

*Crowd Cheer!*

Finding a newspaper to publish Victoria's words seemed nearly impossible. So, again, Victoria forged her own path, and together with Tennie, they started their very own newspaper called, "*Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*", a place where the sisters, and like minded writers could freely

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share their ideas. And, on January 11th, 1872 Victoria took those ideas to Washington D.C., where she became the first woman to speak in front of Congress, demanding her right to vote.

Although Victoria was a strong writer, speaking in public did not come naturally. But, speech by speech she became stronger, and more confident. Allowing her inner spirit and the convictions of her ideas to replace her fears. And, in New York City, at Steinway Hall, she gave her largest speech yet, with over 3,000 people gathered to hear Victoria speak. She called for Equal rights for all humans, no matter what class, education, ethnicity or gender. The crowd cried out for their Madam President, and nominated the great abolitionist & writer Frederick Douglass as her running mate.

But, as her fan base grew, so did her opposition. Women of her time rarely spoke in public, let alone shared such strong and personal convictions. Her critics, those of those wealthy, privileged class, fought back the only way they knew how- with money. And, in New York City 1872, on the night of the Presidential Election, that money was used to put Victoria Woodhull in jail.

*TRANSITION MUSIC.*

**GABRIELLE:** Sitting in prison on the night of the election, Victoria knew her chances of becoming president were now over. But, there, within the cold silence of her cell, she could hear the familiar sound of her inner-voice. No, she may not have accomplished what she set out for, but through her efforts she had done something others had never even dreamed of. Because of her, a woman *could* now run for President. And, maybe, one day in the future, she could win.

Victoria's first visit to jail was just one of many. Over the next few years her critics would find any excuse to put her, and her family behind bars. But, Victoria was not defeated. She continued giving public speeches, and in one instance, even disguised herself as an elderly woman, wearing a shawl as a disguise in order to trick the police.

She was a force to be reckoned with, but she was also human. And, after years of defending herself, in 1877, at the age of thirty-seven, Victoria, Tennie, Byron and Zula left for England.

In England, Victoria met a banker named John Martin. Victoria and the Colonel had decided to divorce a few years earlier, and Victoria and John Martin were soon married. She also started a new publication with the help of her now adult daughter, Zula, named "The Humanitarian", sharing her call for Equal Rights with a now British audience.

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In 1901 John Martin passed away and Victoria was heartbroken. So, to keep her mother occupied, Zula helped her to open a country school for young women; a quiet place for girls to learn and grow, away from the constraints of society.

And, on June 9th, 1927, at the age of eighty-nine years, Victoria Woodhull peacefully passed away at home, surrounded by her loving children.

*TRANSITION MUSIC.*

**GABRIELLE:** Victoria Woodhull was led by an unwavering inner voice. A child of poverty and little education, she used this voice to speak for the rights of others. Where some reformers were distracted by division, Victoria kept her eye on the goal- equality for all American citizens- not just some.

And, even though she did not win the Presidency, and even though the United States has yet to see a woman president, the work she did for her country will never be forgotten.

Like Victoria Woodhull, the future we see is for us to create.  
So, I wonder, what will you do next?

*End of Episode.*