Ruth Bader Ginsburg is no stranger to the downfalls of gender-based discrimination, as from the early times in her life she was always seen as an inferior with her classmates as well as by the law. Ginsburg’s mother passed away when she was only 17 and taught her to work hard for what she wanted in life and to be an independent lady, and she did just that. Justice Ginsburg was responsible for taking care of her husband, Martin, who was ill with testicular cancer, as well as their newborn child while she was a first-year student at the Harvard school of Law. She was one of nine women in the Harvard law school at the time and didn’t let her issues back home faze her as she went on to graduate in the top 25% of her class and served as the first female member of the Harvard Law Review.

Ginsburg’s motivation to contribute to the advancement of women’s rights in the United States shows through her successful cases working as an attorney for 13 years. RBG made a promise to herself to only take on cases revolving around good law. The first case she worked on was Frontiero v. Richardson which challenged the statute that made it more challenging for women to receive payments for their service in the military as compared to male service members who received allowances for their wives without question. Ginsburg argued that this law discriminated against women and treated them as inferior to men, to which the Supreme Court found true with an 8 to 1 voting in her favor. It was important to Ginsburg to represent all forms or gender discrimination, which includes men as well. She later took on and won a case named Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld in 1975 where she represented a widower man who was denied his survivor benefits of Social Security after his wife passed away. Laws that were currently in place prohibited widowers from receiving their spousal’s benefits after passing while taking care for their children, and Ginsburg challenged this by saying the law discriminated against male widowers by not granting them the same rights that a widow would receive in the case of a spouse passing. Ginsburg took on cases involving gender discrimination against men because she interpreted this subject the same way she read the constitution which was broadly and loosely. She wished to build up the idea of woman’s equality step by step with each case she took on which gave her the credibility to change people’s opinions on gender equality.

The legal status of women would not be the same if it wasn’t for the attorney work of RBG as she used her image of being a strong independent woman and combined that with her knowledge about equal rights as a pathway to educate the ignorant minds of the people who doubted her. She was often asked if she would get upset when judges didn’t think sex discrimination existed, to which she would respond by saying that she was never angry because she saw it as an opportunity for a teaching moment to educate them on the disadvantages that women had to live with. Ginsburg found ways to connect to the judges when dealing with important decisions revolving around gender discrimination by challenging them to think about if they wanted to grow up being treated fair and equal. RBG’s legal success influenced law makers to view man and woman as equal in the court of law. Her work and success in incorporating the Equal Protection Clause in her legal battles lead to huge advancements to the
14th Amendment as it now holds true to the designed purpose of ensuring that men and women are treated equally.

President Jimmy Carter recognized Ginsburg for her revolutionary work and appointed her as the 2nd woman on the United Stated Supreme Court. Justice Ginsburg started off her tenure as a Supreme Court judge upon receiving the landmark case of United Stated v. Virginia which revolved around women not being allowed to join an illustrious military program named VMI based off their gender. Ginsburg sided with the women who wished to join the institution and issued the court’s opinion stating that the Virginia Military Institute violated the equal protection clause as part of the 14th Amendment. The lone dissenting opinion on this case was by Justice Antonin Scalia, who’s an extreme conservative that argued that the majority decision was based on the guidelines of a strict scrutiny standard as compared to the intermediate standard that was used in prior cases. VMI was the last all-male public university in the US before the holding of the case was decided by a 7-1 majority vote to allow women the right to join.

RBG was known to be a liberal judge on the panel who strived for consensus, however, in times where she didn’t feel the court’s majority decisions were just, she had no problem filing for a dissenting opinion, and became infamous for it. It’s important to write a detailed dissenting opinion because its purpose is to convince the judges that they have made the wrong decision and the more information given as to why they misjudged the manner at hand the easier it will be for them to understand the counterargument and change their votes. One of Justice Ginsburg’s most notable and impactful dissents came in the case of Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire where she called to congress to reverse the court’s ruling with legislation that was later passed by President Obama called the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. This act made it easier for female workers to win pay discrimination claims and later became a law.

From watching this film, I have learned how revolutionary RBG has been towards leading the fight for women’s rights through influencing her work as both an attorney and as a Justice on the Supreme Court. She is nothing short of a walking miracle at 85 years old and has proven her dedication to her job by not missing a single oral argument regardless of dealing with the passing of her husband Martin or battling cancer twice.