FINAL

Historic Context Study

The Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973

QUINN EVANS

January 2023

Cover: Clockwise from left: Nannie Helen Burroughs (Library of Congress); Women picketing for the right to vote in front of the White House (National Woman's Party); Alice Paul unfurls the ratification banner at NWP headquarters, August 1920 (Library of Congress); Sofia Reyes de Veyra (Library of Congress); The League of Women Voters, including DC League president Connie Fortune (center)at the April 12, 1970, march for DC suffrage (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post); Members of Delta Sigma Theta in 1930 (Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution); Susan B. Anthony (Library of Congress).

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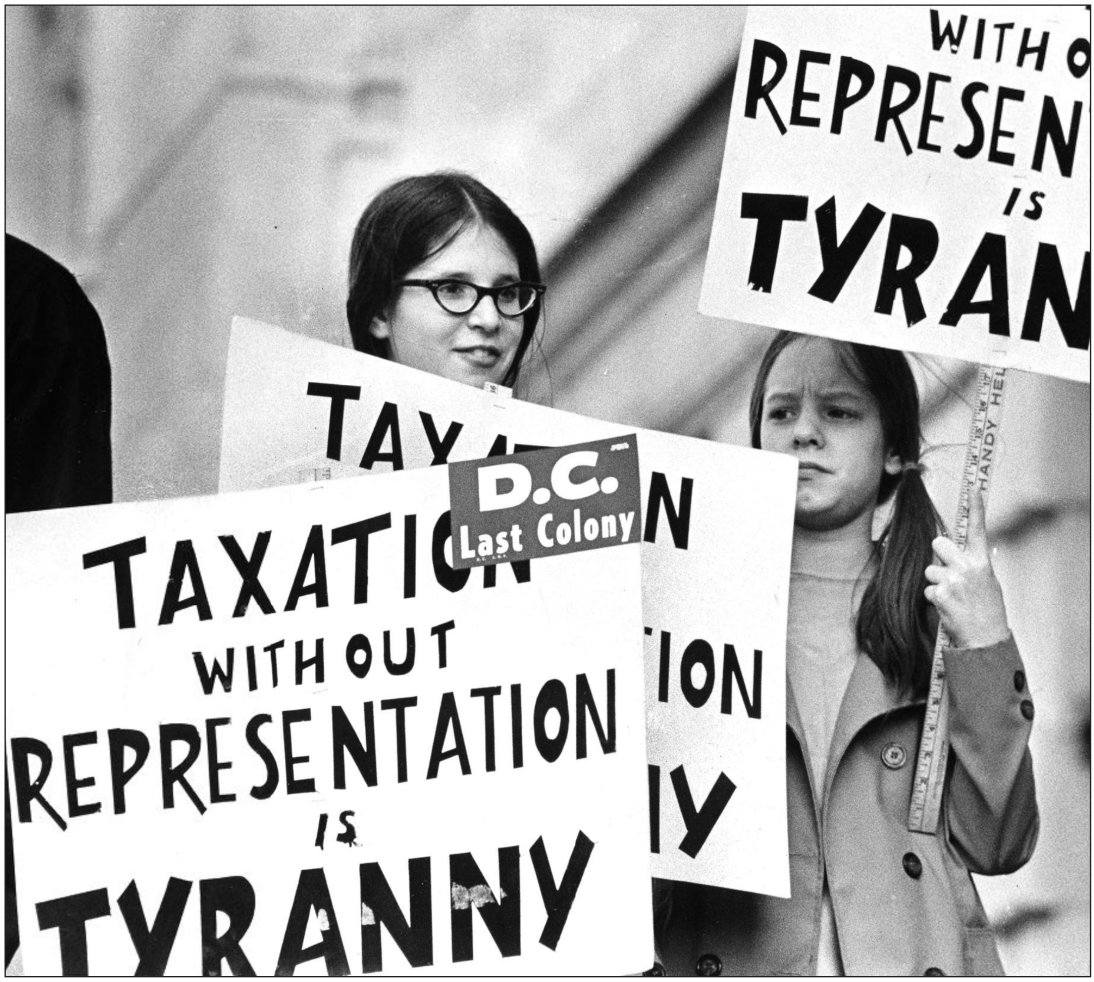

Prepared by:

Quinn Evans

Title Page: Two young girls participate in the League of Women Voters parade in April 1970.

(Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

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List of Acronyms

AAUW	American Association of University Women
AERA	American Equal Rights Association
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
AKA	Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
AWSA	American Woman Suffrage Association
CU	Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage
CWL	Colored Women's League
GFWC	General Federation of Women's Clubs
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NACW	National Association of Colored Women (became the NACWC in 1904)
NACWC	National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (formerly the NACW)
NAOWS	National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage
NAWSA	National American Woman Suffrage Association
NCAPT	National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax
NCNW	National Council of Negro Women
NPC	National Non-partisan Council on Public Affairs
NWP	National Woman's Party
NWSA	National Woman Suffrage Association

List of Acronyms (continued)

SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee
UFA	Universal Franchise Association

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Introduction

The fight for women's suffrage has roots all across America, but many of its most important moments have taken place in Washington, DC, the nation's capital. In addition to local activists who fought not only for women's suffrage but for suffrage for all DC residents, women came from all over the country to Washington, DC, to campaign and lobby Congress for voting rights. National organizations such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman's Party, and later organizations like the National Council for Negro Women, established headquarters in Washington, DC, to lobby the federal government and to gain resources and supporters. As in other American political movements, Washington, DC, was the center stage and launching point for women's suffrage and voting rights movements.

The District of Columbia had its own suffrage movement. Washingtonians were disenfranchised in 1801, when Congress passed the Organic Act, which removed state and federal representation from residents formerly of Maryland and Virginia, and in 1874, when the locally-elected government was replaced with a Presidentially-appointed commission. District residents formed organizations, many of which were led by women, to fight for DC suffrage, particularly national representation and home rule, until the passage of the 1973 Home Rule Act.

Many sites throughout the city attest to this long, rich history of activism. However, the suffragist sites listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places are limited in number and do not tell the full story of how women's suffrage advocates in Washington, DC, won their fight for political representation. The identification of sites throughout the city will help tell the complete story of the campaign for women's suffrage and voting rights, including the story of underrepresented female activists.

This context study identifies important themes in the movement within the District of Columbia, organizes a timeline of events, names critical players, and establishes a preliminary list of places that define this history. Ultimately this study can be used as the framework for nominating sites to the DC Inventory and National Register—a significant step towards honoring the contributions of generations of women throughout American history.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FOCUS OF STUDY

This historic context study focuses specifically on the topic of women's suffrage in the District of Columbia. In this context, suffrage is defined simply as "the right to vote." The time period for this study begins in 1848, the year of the Seneca Falls (New York) Convention, recognized by historians as the start of the women's suffrage movement, and ends in 1973, the year that Congress passed the DC Self-Government and Governmental Reorganization Act (Home Rule Act), which established the District's elected government.

While this historic context explores efforts related to the right to vote in Washington, DC, women and organizations who fought for women's suffrage often had much broader platforms related to women's rights, including issues related to labor, citizenship, education, and the Equal Rights Amendment, to name a few. While the broader quest for equal rights for women is significant, this study is specifically limited to suffrage-related topics, with additional context for other topics when they intersect with suffrage.

Suffrage, particularly voting rights, is also inextricably related to civil rights. While suffrage and its association with the modern civil rights movement is discussed in this context in relation to voting and voting rights, the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C., 1912-1974*[1] more explicitly establishes the historic context and significance of the link between voting rights and the civil rights movement.

Women have historically been underrepresented in historic documentation, and this is especially true for women of color as well as LGBTQ women. Much of the suffrage history we do have is focused on the activities of White women, who tended to marginalize other women when suffrage activities took place as well as in how they wrote about that history later. Recent research has yielded more information on the roles and perspectives of Black women, but for other women of color, very little is documented. Latina and Hispanic women were greatly involved in the suffrage movement, particularly in the western states; however, research conducted for this study did not identify specific women or organizations in Washington, DC, related to this topic. Information has been included where known, but this study acknowledges that further primary research will be required in the future.

[1] Sarah Jane Shoenfeld and Nakita Reed, National Register Multiple Property Documentation form, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C.*, 1912-1974; (December 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This historic context is divided into separate themes that explicate the history of the women's suffrage movement and related efforts of women to secure the right to vote in Washington, DC. The study chapters serve as the framework to identify significant DC citizens, buildings, structures, and sites associated with each of these themes. While the themes identified in this report as well as organizations, individuals, and places associated with them are not exhaustive, the context forms the basis to identify and evaluate resources associated with the seven themes identified below.

Theme 1: Historical Background of the Women's Suffrage Movement provides a broad overview of the development and events of the women's suffrage movement from 1848 until the 19th Amendment passed in 1920.

Theme 2: Politics and the Quest for Women's Suffrage explores the political strategies the women of the suffrage movement employed to achieve passage of the 19th Amendment. This theme also includes an overview of the anti-suffrage movement.

Theme 3: Women's Suffrage Organizations in Washington, DC, identifies and provides summary histories of suffrage organizations, including national organizations with headquarters or local branches in the city, and local organizations.

Theme 4: Intersectionality explores how women of color and gender non-conforming women participated in the suffrage movement and how their experiences differed from cisgender White women as a function of the intersection of race and sex.

Theme 5: After the 19th Amendment - Women, Voting Rights, and Political Activism in the District of Columbia (1920–1965) discusses the obstacles women faced after the passage of the 19th Amendment and efforts by organizations and women in Washington, DC to educate new voters and advocate for voting rights.

Theme 6: Women and the DC Suffrage Movement (1871–1973) explains how women and local women's organizations played a large role in the DC suffrage and home rule movements.

Theme 7: Women and the Youth Suffrage Movement (1940–1971) explores the youth suffrage movement and the role of local women in achieving passage of the 26th Amendment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge several individuals for their assistance in preparation of this report: In particular, we would like to thank Rebecca Miller from the DC Preservation League and Kim Elliott from the DC Historic Preservation Office for their support and enthusiasm for this project and topic. We would also like to thank everyone who kindly provided comments on the draft reports and sent suggestions for sites in Washington, DC, associated with women's suffrage.

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Theme 1: Historical Background of the Women's Suffrage Movement

THE EARLY SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT (1848–1910)

Historians typically date the beginning of the modern women's suffrage movement to the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. In July of that year, approximately 300 people, mostly women, met in Seneca Falls, New York to discuss the social, civil, and religious status of women. At the time, women were unequal in many aspects of American life, including education, employment, property rights, marriage, child custody, and participation in public life, including voting. However, many of the women who attended the convention had taken leadership roles in the early 19th century movement to abolish slavery in the United States. Many were Quakers, a religious denomination that provided equitable roles for men and women, permitted women to travel and preach, and was prominent in anti-slavery activism. In the abolition movement, women developed organizational and leadership skills and demanded the right to speak in public. In the decades prior to the Seneca Falls convention, many abolitionist women also began to directly link abolition and women's rights, notably two leaders of the movement, sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimké (Figure 1-1). Disparaged by some for their public role in opposing slavery, both sisters asserted their rights as women to full social and political equality with men and rejected the criticism of some of their fellow abolitionists that they were diluting abolitionism's cause by also advocating for women's rights. Their public advocacy paved the way for other female activists who supported abolition and women's rights in the mid-19th century.

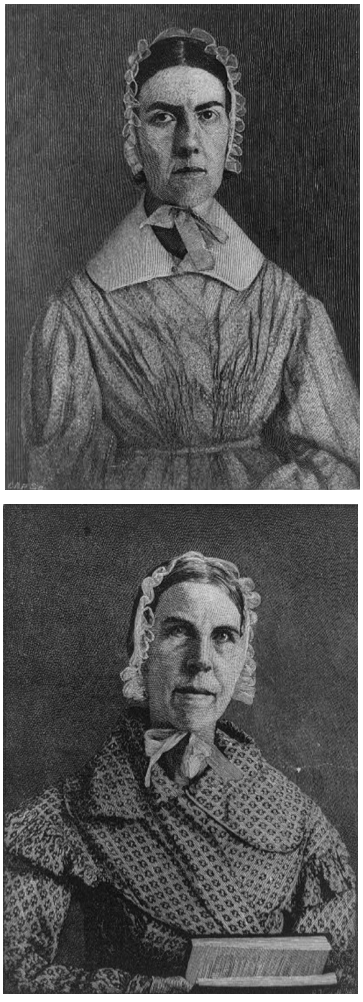
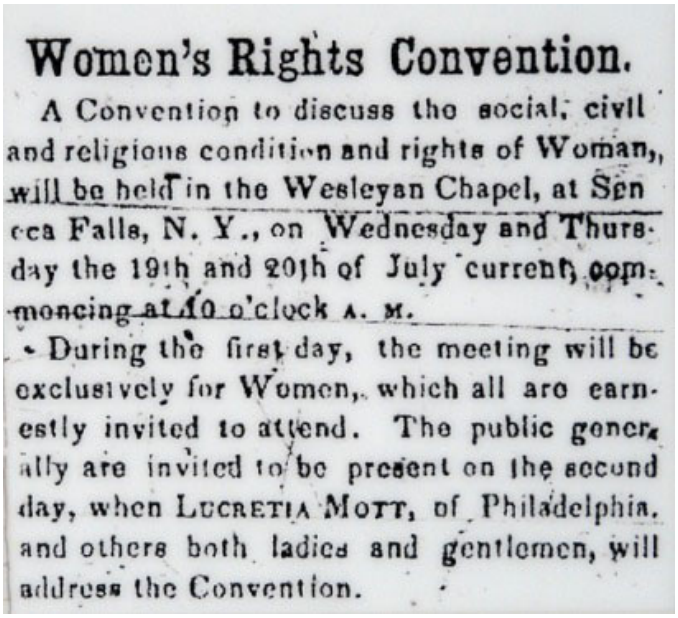


Figure 1-1. Angelina (top) and Sarah Grimké (Library of Congress).

At the two-day Seneca Falls convention (Figure 1-2), participants discussed a series of resolutions developed by convention planners Elizabeth Cady Stanton; Mary Ann McClintock and her daughters, Elizabeth and Mary Ann; sisters Lucretia Coffin Mott and Martha Coffin Wright; and Jane Hunt. The group developed the first ten resolutions concerning equality in employment, religion, family, education, and morals. Shortly before the convention, Stanton on her own added an eleventh resolution (listed as the ninth in the program) calling on women to "secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise." Although the other resolutions passed unanimously, the suffrage plank was

controversial and discussed extensively, with some participants believing it was too radical and would diminish public support for other women's rights issues.

Ironically, it was a Black man who swayed support for the resolution. The respected abolitionist Frederick Douglass spoke during the debate, arguing that "he could not claim the right of suffrage for himself if he would not allow women that same right." His statement helped convince enough of the audience that the suffrage resolution passed, although not unanimously as the others had.[1]



Women's Rights Convention.

A Convention to discuss the social, civil and religious condition and rights of Woman, will be held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, N. Y., on Wednesday and Thursday the 19th and 20th of July current, commencing at 10 o'clock A. M.

During the first day, the meeting will be exclusively for Women, which all are earnestly invited to attend. The public generally are invited to be present on the second day, when LUCRETIA MOTT, of Philadelphia, and others both ladies and gentlemen, will address the Convention.

Figure 1-2. Advertisement for the Seneca Falls convention appearing in the Seneca County Courier (Seneca Falls, NY), July 14, 1848 (Women's Rights National Historical Park. National Park Service.).

Despite the passage of a women's suffrage resolution at the Seneca Falls convention, the franchise was not among the foremost issues in the women's rights movements leading up to the Civil War. Although Elizabeth Cady Stanton teamed with fellow abolitionist and women's rights activist Susan B. Anthony in the 1850s, eventually becoming the most visible leaders of the women's rights movement, their focus in these years was on property rights, rights within the family, education, and employment, not suffrage.

The nascent woman suffrage movement fractured in the aftermath of the Civil War in the debate over the 15th Amendment. At the National Women's Rights Convention of 1866, members voted to form a new organization called the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) to campaign for equal rights for both women and Black people, including suffrage. The AERA was led by Mott, Stanton, Anthony, and Lucy Stone, all women who had previously advocated for both abolition and women's rights. The draft language of the 15th Amendment would only extend the vote to Black men, not women. Suffragists like Anthony and Stanton were dismayed that Black men would be enfranchised before women and believed excluding sex from the amendment would set back the cause of women's suffrage for decades if not more. Others, including many Black women, were willing to compromise in order to gain Black male suffrage, which represented at least some degree of progress.

The contentious debate over the 15th Amendment came to a climax at the May 1869 meeting of the AERA. Immediately after the meeting, Anthony and Stanton split from the AERA and formed the National Woman Suffrage

[1] Sally McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 93-94.

Association (NWSA), a woman-only organization advocating for women's rights as a whole but with an emphasis on gaining the vote through passage of a federal suffrage amendment. The following November the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) was founded, primarily under the leadership of Lucy Stone but with support from Black women including Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Josephine Ruffin. AWSA focused solely on suffrage, and its leaders believed the easier path to success was by pursuing suffrage in individual states via state and local chapters. Following the formation of the NWSA and AWSA, the AERA became functionally dead; it formally disbanded in May 1870 and the women's suffrage movement would remain divided for 20 years.

The 1860s also saw the organization of women's suffrage advocacy in Washington, DC. In 1866, a bill was introduced in Congress to extend the franchise to every male citizen in the capital over 21 for local elections only. It would be the first law in US history permitting Black men to vote, several years before the passage of the 15th Amendment. During the debate over the bill, Republican Senator Edgar Cowan of Pennsylvania introduced an amendment that would strike out the word "male", thus extending the vote to women as well. Although Cowan's amendment was defeated, a group of Washington women formed the Universal Franchise Association (UFA) to formally advocate for women's suffrage. Among the founding members were Josephine White Griffing, an abolitionist who moved to the District during the Civil War and was instrumental in the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau; Belva Lockwood (Figure 1-3), one of the first female lawyers in the US and also the first woman to appear on official ballots for president in 1884 and 1888; Sara A. Spencer, one of several women who later (albeit unsuccessfully) sued to establish women's right to vote under the 14th Amendment; Caroline B. Winslow, the fifth woman in the US to obtain a degree in medicine; and Winslow's friend and medical colleague Susan Edson, President James Garfield's family physician. The organization, renamed the Woman Suffrage Association of the District of Columbia around 1876, aligned itself with the NWSA and acted as the local host for the national convention beginning in 1870.[2]

In 1870 members of the UFA and NWSA petitioned the Congressional Committee on the District of Columbia to extend the vote to women of the District in the same manner that it had been extended to Black men in 1868. When that failed, 70 women attempted to register to vote

[2] "Suffrage Society Here is Pioneer Equality Advocate," *The Washington Times*, July 22, 1914, 7.

Figure 1-3. Belva Lockwood, ca. 1890s (Library of Congress).

in the District in 1871 and 1872, including Lockwood and Mary Ann Shadd Cary, the first Black woman newspaper editor in the US.[3]

NWSA and AWSA continued to pursue separate legislative routes to suffrage in the 1870s and 1880s. Although a federal amendment (later known as the Anthony Amendment after Susan B. Anthony) was first introduced to Congress in 1868 and in subsequent Congressional sessions, it failed to advance out of the committee stage before the end of the century. The state approach saw some victories during this period, notably in the territory of Wyoming, which was the first to enfranchise women in 1869. It was followed by several other territories, although these did not translate into a national momentum for suffrage.

By the 1890s, the wounds of the fight over the 15th Amendment had faded, and the NWSA and AWSA began negotiating a merger. Following a joint convention in 1890, the two organizations unified into the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), with Susan B. Anthony as president. Although the new organization continued to pursue both a federal amendment and state-by-state strategy, the suffrage movement entered what some historians have termed "the doldrums" in the 1890s and first decade of the 1900s.[4] The federal amendment was not introduced in Congress from 1896 to 1913 and no states passed suffrage bills between 1896 and 1910. The movement was also experiencing a change in leadership, as the first generation of activists, women like Anthony, Stanton, Stone, and Mott, had either passed away or retired, and a new generation of leaders took their place.

ACHIEVING SUFFRAGE (1910–1920)

In 1910, the male voters of Washington State, by a wide margin, amended the state constitution to grant women the right to vote. Several other states quickly followed, including California (1911), Alaska, Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon (1912) and Montana and Nevada (1913). These victories re-energized NAWSA's state-by-state strategy, although progress was much slower in the more populous eastern and midwestern states.

[3] Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights* Movement in the United States, Enlarged Edition, 3rd Revised edition (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 1996), 168.

[4] Flexner and Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle*, 256. Other historians have argued that this was a period of rebuilding and redefinition of the movement. See Sara Hunter Graham, "The Suffrage Renaissance: A New Image for a New Century, 1896-1910," in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, ed., *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale, OR: Newsage Press, 1995).

Figure 1-4. Women in the suffrage parade, March 1913 (Library of Congress).

The federal amendment path was also revived in the early 1910s, largely through the efforts of two women who had met while working for the British suffrage movement, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns. Paul and Burns formed a Congressional Committee within NAWSA in 1912 to lobby for a constitutional amendment. Their first major event was a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC, on March 3, 1913, the day before the inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson (Figure 1-4). Over 8,000 people participated in the parade, and an estimated half-million spectators lined the route. Hostile spectators threw objects at the marchers and pushed into the parade. The police did little to stop them. The women had to fight their way through the crowds until the Army's Fifteenth Cavalry, stationed at nearby Fort Myer, arrived to restore order.

The March 1913 suffrage parade was a tremendous success in terms of publicity for the Congressional Committee's cause. Paul and Burns took the opportunity to condemn police inaction and solicit press coverage and donations. The Congressional Committee immediately capitalized on the momentum from the parade to organize a delegation to the White House, the first of four during that year, to urge Wilson to support the amendment. In April 1913, the federal suffrage amendment was reintroduced in Congress for the first time since 1896. The committee reorganized as a more independent affiliate of NAWSA called the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (CU). However, the Committee's strategies increasingly came into conflict with the NAWSA leadership, and the organizations separated in February 1914. The CU, renamed the National Woman's Party (NWP) in 1916, organized state chapters and began lobbying the "party in power"—the Democratic Party—to advance the bill in Congress, and to convince President Wilson to support the bill.

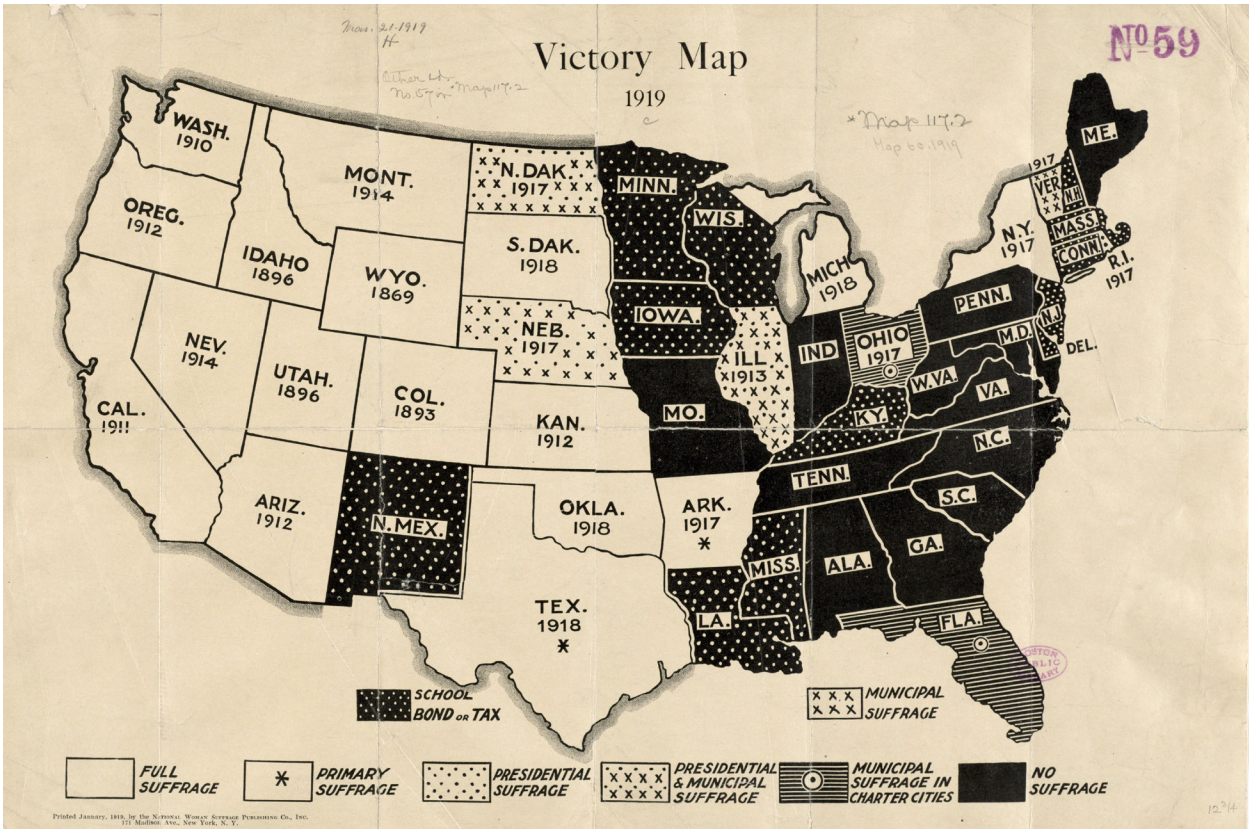


Figure 1-5. 1919 "Victory Map," illustrating women's suffrage by state. Out of 48 states, 15 had full suffrage and 12 had no suffrage at this time. The map also illustrates states that had primary suffrage (women could vote in primaries, but not in elections); presidential suffrage (women could vote for President of the United States but not municipal or state officials); presidential and municipal suffrage (women could vote for President of the United States and in local elections, but not for state offices); municipal suffrage (women could vote for local official but not for higher offices); Municipal suffrage in charter cities (women could vote on local elections in only certain cities of a state); and school bond or tax (women could vote related to school bonds and/or matters related to taxes (National Woman Suffrage Publishing via Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library).

Meanwhile, NAWSA continued to work for state suffrage measures, hoping this would create momentum for a federal amendment. By the mid 1910s, NAWSA increasingly prioritized the federal approach. The two major suffrage organizations continued to differ on tactics; NAWSA, the more conservative organization, relied on traditional lobbying and a friendlier approach to winning support from both political parties and the president. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, NAWSA members participated in the war effort and softened their activism for suffrage, while never completely stopping it. In contrast, the NWP focused its efforts on the party in power and used militant tactics, like picketing the White House, to increase pressure on the president to support suffrage. Thousands of women, known as "Silent Sentinels," volunteered to spend time on the pickets and provide support. The NWP refused to officially participate in the war effort and continued its picketing activities. While this approach was disruptive and frequently controversial, it also kept the issue of suffrage in the headlines.

By early 1918, a number of factors had combined to tip the scales for passage of the federal amendment bill in Congress. In addition to the advocacy work of NAWSA, the NWP, and other suffrage organizations, a number of states passed suffrage measures in 1917, including key victories in New York and in Arkansas, the first southern state to grant women voting rights in primary elections (Figure 1-5). Using women's war work as justification, President Wilson officially endorsed the suffrage amendment in January, and the House passed the bill the following day. However, the bill continued to meet resistance in the Senate, which failed to pass the measure that year.

Following the national election of 1918, a new session of Congress opened, and in May 1919 the House again passed the amendment bill and sent it back to the Senate. After an intense lobbying campaign, the Senate finally passed the Anthony Amendment in early June, beginning the process of ratification. NAWSA and the NWP effectively used their state branches in the ratification campaign. Following an initial flurry of state ratification in June and July, progress slowed. By November half of the 36 states needed had signed, and in March 1920, the count had reached 35. When Delaware unexpectedly rejected the bill, only five states remained in play, and Tennessee became the battleground. A 24-year-old Tennessee legislator, at the urging of his mother, finally cast the deciding vote in favor of ratification on August 18, 1920, and the 19th Amendment became law upon the state's certification on August 26, 1920 (Figure 1-6).

Figure 1-6. Alice Paul unfurls the ratification banner at NWP headquarters, August 1920 (Library of Congress).

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Theme 2: Politics and the Quest for Women's Suffrage

OVERVIEW

The women's suffrage movement had a simple political goal: winning the right to vote through legislation. The women (and some men) who led and participated in the movement employed a multitude of political strategies to achieve that goal, but there were two main approaches: passing individual suffrage measures in each state, and ratifying a constitutional amendment that would grant all women in the US the right to vote. The two approaches were not mutually exclusive. Most women, even if they favored one approach, recognized the value in any progress extending the franchise to women; for example, the more state referenda passed, the easier it would become to pass a federal suffrage amendment.

TWO ORGANIZATIONS, TWO APPROACHES (1869–1890)

The split between the two approaches coalesced following the rancorous debate between the NWSA and the AWSA in 1869. As established in the previous section, the NWSA, led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, focused on a federal amendment, while also advocating for women's rights in general, while the AWSA, led by Lucy Stone, concentrated on state-by-state progress and suffrage only.

The AWSA was typically characterized as the more conservative organization; it accepted only representatives from recognized suffrage organizations and used conventional political methods to achieve its goals. Initially, the state-by-state approach seemed more likely to bear fruit; although the first state suffrage referendum in Kansas in 1867 had failed, the Wyoming Territory passed the nation's first woman suffrage bill in 1869, and Utah followed in 1870. The Washington Territory passed women's suffrage in 1883, but it was overturned four years later by the territorial Supreme Court on a technicality. Women gained suffrage in the Montana Territory in 1887, and Wyoming's admittance to the Union made it the first state in which women could vote (Figure 2-1). However, following successful referenda in Colorado (1893) and Idaho (1896), no more states passed women's suffrage until 1910 (see Appendix A).

In contrast, the NWSA was characterized as a more unorthodox organization and Stanton and Anthony were more aggressive in their

Figure 2-1. "The Awakening," by Henry Mayer (1915) illustrates a torch-bearing woman labeled "Votes for Women," symbolizing the awakening of the nation's women to suffrage, striding across the western states, where women already had the right to vote, toward the east, where women are reaching out to her (Library of Congress).

methods, but this approach did not translate into measurable progress. Although a federal amendment had been introduced in Congress in 1868, it was not until the 1880s that both chambers of Congress established committees to consider the bill. Even so, the amendment garnered little support in Congress and by the mid-1890s was moribund.

Nevertheless, in the 1870s and 1880s women across the suffrage movement gained valuable experience and skills and built much of the groundwork on which later success would be based. State and local organizations were established, women developed and refined their understanding of the intricacies of state and federal legislative procedures, and speakers and writers worked to sway public opinion.

SUFFRAGE'S SECOND GENERATION (1890–1920)

During the "doldrums" of the women's suffrage movement of the 1890s and 1900s, many of the early leaders from the abolition and NWSA/AWSA eras retired or passed away. Behind them was a younger generation of women whose backgrounds and experiences were radically different. Many of these women had attended/graduated from higher education institutions, and increasing numbers were entering the workforce as professionals, affording them greater independence in managing their lives. The philosophical arguments that had predominated in the 19th century gave way to more practical reasons to demand the vote: women's economic and social independence required

Figure 2-2. NAWSA Officers and State Branch Presidents, 1892 (C. C. Catt Albums, Bryn Mawr College Library).

political autonomy. Women could also point to western states like Wyoming and Utah where women had been successfully voting for nearly three decades.

One result of the generational change in the suffrage movement was the reunification of NWSA and AWSA. By the late 1880s the rift that had caused the split in the movement was largely irrelevant, and as NWSA matured as an organization, its philosophy and strategies were more aligned with AWSA's. After several years of negotiation, the two organizations merged in 1890 as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) (Figure 2-2). However, the organization still struggled to enact a coherent political strategy and rebuild its membership as well as its national and state infrastructure. While the organization was ostensibly united, in practice there were still deep divisions, including continued disagreement over the state-by-state versus federal amendment strategy and the alienation of working class women, who clashed with the largely middle- and upper-class leadership, and women of color, who were marginalized because White women feared losing Southern support. The turmoil even extended to the location of the annual convention. NAWSA voted to hold the convention in Washington, DC, only in alternate years to alleviate the travel burden of members travelling from western states over the strenuous objection of Anthony, who remained

Figure 2-3. Lucy Burns (top) and Alice Paul (bottom) (Library of Congress).

convinced that the real work of the organization should take place in the capital in pursuit of a federal amendment. Despite this, Anthony did not establish a national headquarters for the organization, let alone one in the District.

Unsurprisingly, given this slump in the organization's effectiveness, little progress was made in either the states or the federal amendment until after 1910, when Washington State enacted women's suffrage (again). When seven more states followed between 1910 and 1913, it appeared that the state-by-state strategy had new life. However, these votes largely took place in the less populous Western states, which had always been more amenable to suffrage, while it would take a big victory in a major Midwestern or Eastern state to signal momentum for a federal amendment.

Meanwhile, the federal amendment approach also received new life through the efforts of two young suffragists, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns (Figure 2-3). Burns and Paul met in the late 1900s in Britain, where both had become involved in the British suffrage movement, specifically the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Unlike the American suffrage movement, the WSPU engaged in much more aggressive tactics, organizing raucous rallies and gradually escalating to smashing windows and causing other property damage. They drew even greater attention to the cause when they engaged in hunger strikes in prison and were force-fed by prison officials.

When Paul and Burns returned to the United States they decided to apply some of what they had learned to the American suffrage movement. They joined NAWSA with the intention of reviving the federal amendment by applying significant political pressure to American politicians. Along with a group of like-minded young woman activists, they planned their first large event, a march down Pennsylvania Avenue on the day before newly elected President Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated on March 3, 1913. Not only was the march wildly successful in terms of participants and spectators, but clashes between marchers and hostile spectators brought intense publicity to the cause.

While Burns and Paul had no intention of copying the more extreme measures of the British suffragettes, their militant approach made many in NAWSA uncomfortable. Eventually, their organization separated from NAWSA, forming the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (CU) in 1914, renamed the National Woman's Party (NWP) in 1916. In 1917, the NWP escalated their advocacy by regularly picketing the White House, calling out President Wilson personally for his reluctance to endorse suffrage. On January 10, 1917, twelve

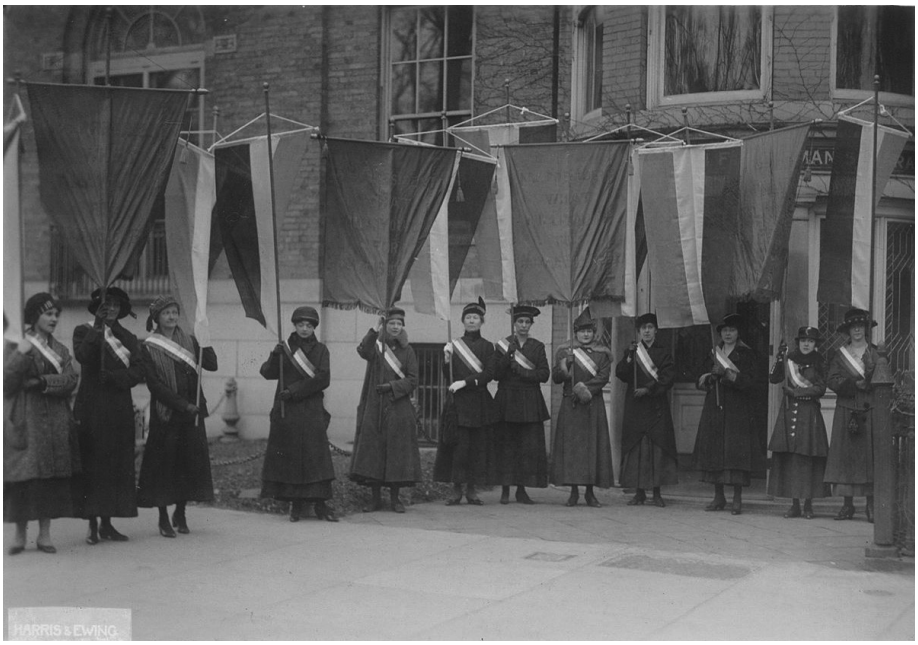

Figure 2-4. The first 12 picketers outside Cameron House, Washington DC, January 10, 1917 (Library of Congress).

women of the NWP walked across Lafayette Square carrying banners in the suffragist colors of purple, white, and gold, and began their silent vigil at the gates of the White House (Figure 2-4). They were reportedly the first people to ever picket the White House.[1] The picket drew a tremendous response from supporters. Coordinated by NWP member Mabel Vernon, thousands of women, also known as "Silent Sentinels," volunteered to spend time on the pickets or to otherwise provide support. The party held “themed” days where it highlighted certain states, institutions, and professions. Among the pickets were Black women, including Mary Church Terrell, although Terrell remained critical of the White suffragists’ disinterest in issues relevant to Black women.

The initial tone of the picketing was positive but that began to change as the United States moved closer to war. In anticipation of this, the NWP members met to discuss their position. Along with Alice Paul, many in the organization were Quakers who were unlikely to take part in a war effort, but continuing agitation for a suffrage amendment while the country was at war would almost certainly draw intense criticism. The convention decided to continue picketing, in contrast to NAWSA, which downplayed its suffrage activism and took on war work.

Following the US entry into World War I in April 1917, the picketing campaign became more disruptive, especially when the pickets held banners comparing the United States unfavorably to Russia during a diplomatic visit from Russian representatives. Crowds began to gather and spectators attacked the pickets.

1 “Alice Paul and Suffragists Were First to Picket the White House,” *Smithsonian Snapshot*, https://www.si.edu/newsdesk/snapshot/alice-paul-and-suffragists-were-first-picket-white-house, accessed September 2020.

Figure 2-5. Lucy Burns in Occoquan Workhouse, 1917 (Library of Congress).

In June 1917 police began arresting the pickets on charges of obstruction of traffic, the only applicable law they could find. Although the women could have paid a fine, they chose to go to the District jail for three days on principle. The following month, 16 women were sentenced to 60 days confinement at Occoquan Workhouse, a federal prison in Virginia. Although President Wilson soon pardoned and released the first group, more and more women were arrested in subsequent months with longer sentences handed down. Prison officials began abusing the prisoners, both physically and psychologically, putting them in solitary confinement and attempting to humiliate them by making them sleep next to Black women prisoners. In October 1917, Alice Paul was arrested and sentenced to seven months in the District jail, the longest term handed down. In a callback to her experience in the British suffrage movement, Paul and fellow inmate and NWP member Rose Winslow began a hunger strike; in response, their jailers brutally force-fed them.[2]

The NWP widely publicized the conditions under which the women were being held, particularly after the November 14, 1917 "Night of Terror" when women were clubbed, beaten, and tortured by guards at the Occoquan Workhouse. The prisoners' accounts of their experiences roused public sympathy, and in late November all the picketers were released. Their sentences were invalidated in March 1918. Although the NWP continued to picket the White House from time to time over the next year, it did not draw as intense a response as it had in 1917. It it estimated that over the course of two and a half years, approximately 2,000 women participated in the National Woman's Party pickets, 500 women were arrested, and 168 women were jailed.[3]

By the 1910s NAWSA had been re-energized under the leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw. While they pursued a more traditional advocacy strategy than the NWP, the cumulative effect was successful in pressuring Congress to finally approve the suffrage bill in the summer of 1919. Decades of work in developing state and local suffrage networks paid off during the effort to secure ratification in the necessary 36 states, completed August 1920, and in fending off the final court challenges later that year. In November 1920, women across America cast ballots for the first time, although significant challenges remained for many women in exercising that right.

2 Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920) 109, 216-224.

3 Library of Congress, "Historical Overview of the National Woman's Party, accessed 2 November 2021 at https://www.loc.gov/static/collections/women-of-protest/images/history.pdf

Figure 2-6. Suffragists at the U.S. Capitol in 1919 (Library of Congress).

ANTI-SUFFRAGISTS

Opposition to women's suffrage had existed since the beginning of the movement. Gender rhetoric of the early 19th century held that women were the "weaker sex", and that the sexes occupied "separate spheres" and women's province was the house and family; by virtue of this, women were disqualified from public life. Many anti-suffragists, both men and women, argued that women could exercise more influence through their roles as wives and mothers.

At around the same time as NWSA and AWSA were beginning their activism, anti-suffrage organizations were also being founded. Among these early organizations was the Washington, DC-based Anti-Woman Suffrage Society, founded around 1870 by Eleanor Boyle Ewing Sherman, wife of General William Tecumseh Sherman (at the time Commanding General of the United States Army), Madeline Vinton Dahlgren, writer and wife of Admiral John A. Dahlgren, and scientist and educator Almira Lincoln Phelps. The society published an anti-suffrage periodical called "True Woman" from 1870–1873, but it is unclear what happened to the group after that date.[4]

Opposition to women's suffrage strengthened during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as more states enacted suffrage and the fight to pass a federal amendment gained ground. Aside from the general opposition exhibited in earlier years, a few specific strands of opposition coalesced during this period.

[4] Martha Hagan, "The Rhetoric of the American Anti-Suffrage Movement, 1867-1920" (PhD diss., Washington State University, May 1993), 54.

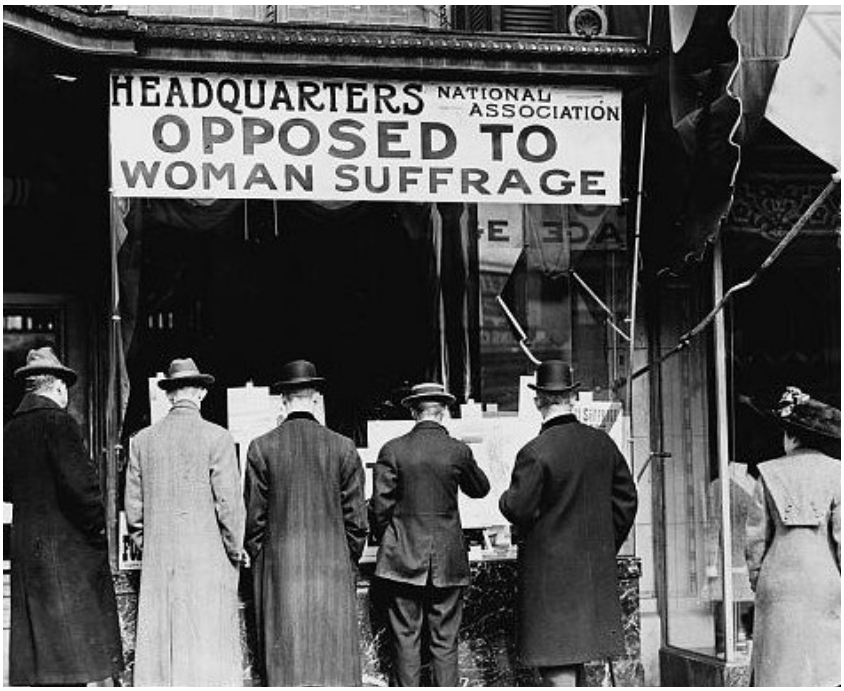

Figure 2-7. Headquarters of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. The photo is dated 1911, when the NAOWS was headquartered in New York City, but the photographer was Harris & Ewing, a firm local to DC. It is possible that this was a local headquarters, or that the photograph was actually taken in 1917 (Library of Congress).

Anti-suffrage sentiment was strong in the South. Although Black men had nominally been enfranchised by the 15th Amendment, after the failure of Reconstruction racist Southerners enacted laws and social controls to restrict and discourage Black voters. Anti-suffragists in the South feared that enfranchising women would mean enfranchising Black women too. They particularly opposed a federal amendment for that reason, and Southern White suffragists often favored a state-by-state approach since it would give state legislatures more control over excluding Black voters.

During the late 19th century, the temperance movement made significant progress in advocating for the prohibition of alcohol. Among the most influential organizations was the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded in 1873. While temperance was not ostensibly a women's rights issue, the WCTU, in particular, linked alcohol to larger social problems in the US that often disproportionately affected women. Frances Willard, leader of the WCTU during the latter decades of the 20th century, was also an ardent suffragist, believing that women needed the vote to achieve social reform. As the WCTU grew in size and impact, the brewing lobby rightly feared that if women were enfranchised, they would tip the scales toward prohibition. Brewing interests quietly funded lobbying at both the state and federal level, as well as grassroots efforts to convince men to vote no in state suffrage referenda.

Business and industry groups were also concerned that women voters would back reforms that would impact their profits. Women reformers of the late 19th century indeed worked to ameliorate problems related to industrialization and urbanization, establishing settlement houses, advocating for restrictions on child labor, an eight hour work day, safer working conditions, equal pay, etc. Women leaders of anti-suffrage efforts were often the wives of wealthy, socially prominent leaders of business and industry and used their wealth to provide operating funds to other anti-suffrage groups. In the same vein, the political "machines" that controlled

Figure 2-8. DC Central Public Library, where some suffrage and anti-suffrage meetings were held (Library of Congress).

city politics often opposed suffrage for similar reasons, fearing that a voting block of women could "clean up" politics and diminish their power.

Following the early example of the Anti-Woman Suffrage Society of the 1870s as well as the pro-suffrage groups founded in the following decades, women opposed to suffrage began developing their own advocacy programs. A group of anti-suffragists attempted to start a debate at the 1896 NAWSA convention in Washington, DC, but were rebuffed by Susan B. Anthony and other NAWSA leaders, who claimed that the "antis" had no new arguments to present.[5]

Over the next two decades, anti-suffragists in DC founded local branches of national anti-suffrage organizations. In 1910 Ella C. Brehaut called a meeting of women to start a branch of the National League for the Civic Education of Women,[6] an organization which appears to have been superseded by the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS), organized the following year in New York as an umbrella organization to coordinate state associations (Figure 2-7). Like NAWSA, NAOWS formed a Congressional Committee to coordinate its lobbying efforts. The DC branch of the NAOWS was the District of Columbia Anti-Suffrage Association, headed by Grace Duffield Goodwin, whose members included Clara Wales Root, wife of then Senator (and later Secretary of State) Elihu Root, and Mildred Wendell Wickersham, wife of Attorney General George W. Wickersham.

[5] "Anti-Suffragists Come," *The Evening Times*, January 25, 1896, 6.
[6] "Anti-Suffrage Branch for Capital," *Evening Star*, November 6, 1910, 16.

By early 1912, the DC branch of the NAOWS was holding regular meetings in public venues including the Central Public Library (Carnegie Library) at Mount Vernon Square (Figure 2-8) and the Columbia Theater at 1112 F Street NW (demolished). At one meeting on March 26, 1912, at the Central Public Library, suffragists entered the meeting to distribute pro-suffrage pamphlets. While the local newspapers attempted to characterize the incident as creating an "uproar", in a show of solidarity Goodwin disputed the report, writing to the *Washington Herald* to state that, while the groups disagreed, the newspapers had exaggerated the incident:

> The suffragists and anti-suffragists in the District are, many of them, warm personal friends, and broad-minded enough to consider impersonally an honest difference of opinion. The suffragists have treated our new organization and its representatives fairly and kindly, and we deplore the fact that to newspaper accounts of meetings women everywhere owe much of the acrimony and hard feelings which has been generated. We desire to have both sides of the question everywhere presented, that women may espouse one or the other; but it will make no difference in the friendly feeling existing between the suffrage and anti-suffrage women of Washington.[7]

Anti-suffragists in the District responded to the March 3, 1913, suffrage parade by organizing public gatherings prior to and following the parade, including at the Belasco Theater at 17 Madison Place NW (demolished) and the Washington Theater on the corner of C and 11th streets, near Pennsylvania Avenue (demolished), to promote their positions.[8] Later that year, the NAOWS opened a permanent headquarters at 1402 H Street NW; by this time the president of the organization was Elizabeth Boggs (Mrs. Arthur W.) Dunn.[9]

Opponents to the women's suffrage amendment in Congress made numerous arguments on why women should not be allowed to vote. On January 12, 1915, after a 10 hour debate, the U.S. House voted 204-174 against the suffrage amendment. Many of the speakers were outright sexist and racist. Representative Martin Dies of Texas, for example, stated that one of the reasons he opposed giving women the vote was “because it would thrust the ballot into the hands of millions of ignorant negro women of the South and force unsought political burdens upon millions of home makers throughout the land who are at present more profitably employed than in running after politics.” Representative Stanley E. Bowdle of Ohio based his decision on a survey he conducted on the streetcars and streets of Washington, DC. Over the previous week, Bowdle counted the number of men and women in his

7 Grace D. Goodwin, “Anti-suffrage Meeting,” (Letter to the Editor), *Washington Herald*, March 28, 1912, 12.
8 “Battleground to be Here,” *Evening Star*, February 13, 1913, 2.
9 “’Antis’ Arrive to Battle Against Votes for Women,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 1913, 2.

streetcar and noted how many were reading the newspaper. Only one women of the 99 he counted was reading, while of the 116 men, 55 were reading. He also asked a newsboy who sold papers at Pennsylvania Avenue and 14th Street NW to conduct his own tally. The newsboy later reported that he had sold 496 papers to men and only 59 papers to women. Bowdle stood before his fellow Congressmen and said, “the women of this smart Capital are beautiful; indeed, their beauty is positively disturbing to business, but they are not interested in affairs of state." Bowdle voted against women's suffrage.[10] It was the amendment's second defeat in less than a year—the Senate had previously voted against the amendment in March 1914. After the defeat in January 1915, Josephine Marshall Jewell (Mrs. Arthur M.) Dodge, president of the NAOWS, told the *Washington Post*, "The result was what we expected. It means that the suffrage movement, fostered by hysterical women, is on the wane."[11]

After a national convention of the NAOWS in DC in December 1916 and their defeat in the 1917 New York state suffrage referendum, the organization moved its headquarters to 1621 K Street NW in mid-1917 to focus its efforts on opposing the federal amendment.[12] Following passage of the amendment by the Senate in June 1919, the Association's president, Alice Hay Wadsworth, wife of New York Senator James W. Wadsworth, resigned from the organization, calling further opposition "useless." Under new leadership, the organization continued to work against the amendment in the states. Following ratification of the 19th Amendment in August 1920, it joined with the American Constitutional League and the Maryland League for State Defense to campaign for removing the power to ratify constitutional amendments from state legislatures in favor of a popular vote or state convention.[13]

[10] John Kelly, "In 1915, a U.S. Congressman Tailed How Many in D.C. Read the Newspaper, then Rejected Their Right to Vote," *Washington Post,* 12 January 2022.
[11] "Suffrage Meets Defeat in House," *Washington Post*, 13 January 1915:1.
[12] "Antis Plan National Fight," *Washington Post*, June 24, 1917, 7; "Anti-Suffrage Quarters Informally Dedicated," *Evening Star*, July 21, 1917, 3.
[13] "'Antis' May Drop Fight," *Washington Post*, June 7, 1919, 2; "New Ratifying Means Sought," *Washington Herald*, November 14, 1920, 4.

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Theme 3: Women's Suffrage Organizations in Washington, DC

OVERVIEW

Women's suffrage activities typically took place within the context of established organizations. The District had a number of local organizations, but because it is also the nation's capital, many national organizations had headquarters in the city. Local organizations were independent entities, branches of a national organization or, in the case of the District of Columbia Equal Suffrage Association, an umbrella organization of multiple suffrage organizations that also served as the District auxiliary of NAWSA. And sometimes, the lines blurred between the designations, especially when women were members of multiple organizations.

Similarly, distinctions can be made between organizations focused solely, or chiefly, on women's suffrage, and those that included suffrage as one element in a comprehensive approach to women's rights, or that linked suffrage to accomplishment of a related advocacy issue. Aside from the particular focus of a group, many women linked suffrage to other issues relevant to women's rights, including labor, education, property rights, woman and child wellness, marriage equality, etc. Women with common interests, such as working women or college women, also formed suffrage-related associations.

Suffrage organizations engaged in a variety of activities to achieve their legislative outcome. Most included public awareness and educational activities, fundraising to support their own organization or activities related to the cause, and lobbying, particularly relevant in DC, at the federal level and sometimes in support of suffrage initiatives in other states.

Whatever the particular focus and character of women's organizations that engaged in suffrage advocacy, they served to leverage the experiences, skills, and interests of their members in working for equal suffrage. Local groups were critical to building the groundwork of the movement, recruiting and training new members, and educating their families, friends, and neighbors. National organizations coordinated the work of local chapters, directed statewide efforts, and helped to focus the efforts and messages of the entire organization. Suffrage organizations also provided opportunities

for their members to gain valuable experience in operations, leadership, fundraising, and public speaking, as well as forming political and social connections. Members supported each other, often providing social and emotional support for women who did not conform to societal norms.

Not all experiences were positive; women of the suffrage movement could and did disagree on a variety of issues. Some of these disagreements could be bitter and result in disruption, such as the split between the NWSA and AWSA over the 15th Amendment, or the break between NAWSA and the NWP related to approach and strategy. Black women and other women of color were often marginalized or excluded within majority White organizations.

The list of organizations below is likely not exhaustive. In such a large movement, many groups were formed but some survived for only a short time, or their activities may not have been reported in the media. They may not have recorded their activities, or the records may not have survived or been discovered yet.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Equal Rights Association (AERA). Formed in 1866 to campaign for suffrage for both women and Black Americans. Many of its members were veterans of both the abolition and women's rights movements; prominent members included Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone and her husband Henry Blackwell, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Abby Kelley, Stephen Foster, and Frederick Douglass. Sojourner Truth spoke at the 1867 convention in New York City. After a contentious annual meeting in 1869, the organization split into two factions and formally dissolved in 1870.

American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). Founded in 1869 as part of the split in the American Equal Rights Association following the acrimonious debate over the 15th Amendment. AWSA focused its efforts on suffrage and allowed both men and women to join, alternating the presidency between men and women. Prominent members included Lucy Stone, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Julia Ward Howe, Josephine Ruffin, Charlotte Forten, Henry Blackwell, and Henry Ward Beecher. AWSA published a weekly newspaper called the *Woman's Journal;* this periodical continued under NAWSA and the League of Women Voters until it ceased publication in 1927. AWSA was based in Boston, Massachusetts, where many of its founders lived, although conventions and meetings were held throughout the east coast and Midwest. The first DC meeting of the organization was held in 1871 and it periodically sponsored meetings and speakers in the city. Members also traveled to DC to petition or testify before

Congress on suffrage. Although AWSA's model concentrated on state and local chapters, it is unclear if there was an official Washington, DC, chapter.

National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). Founded in 1869 as the other half of the split in the AERA. The NWSA was considered the more radical of the two organizations, allowed only women to join, and expanded its activities beyond suffrage to include other women's rights issues. The NWSA was led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton; other well-known members of the organization included Matilda Joslyn Gage, Virginia Minor, Ernestine Rose, Hattie Purvis, and Paulina Kellogg Wright Davis. While Stanton and Anthony were based in New York City, the organization held its annual convention in Washington, DC, every January at various locations around the city, including Lincoln Hall (destroyed by fire in 1886), Tallmadge Hall (demolished), the Universalist Church at Thirteenth and L NW (demolished) (Figure 3-1), among others. The District had an active local chapter of the NWSA, headed for many years by Belva Lockwood. Other DC women involved in the chapter included Ellen Clark Sargent, Sara A. Spencer, Caroline B. Winslow, and Susan A. Edson. At the January 1883 convention, the NWSA adopted a resolution stating that "paying Dr. Susan A. Edson for her services as attendant physician to President Garfield $1,000 less than was paid for the same services rendered by Dr. Boynton, a more recent graduate of the same college from which she received her diploma, is AN UNJUST DISCRIMINATION ON ACCOUNT OF SEX."[1]

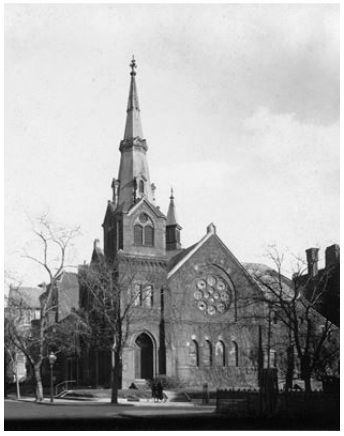

Figure 3-1. The Universalist Church at 13th and L Street NW, demolished (http://www.adolf-cluss.org/).

Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Founded in 1874 to advocate for abstinence from alcohol. The WCTU expanded its platform in 1879 under the leadership of Frances Willard to encompass other issues affecting women, most significantly suffrage, which Willard saw as key to accomplishing the organization's overall goals. The WCTU was considered a tangential suffrage organization without some of the negative connotations of the main suffrage organizations. The WCTU became a highly influential woman's group during the latter decades of the 19th century. After Willard died in 1898, the organization refocused primarily on prohibition, eventually succeeding in passing the 18th Amendment (Prohibition) in 1919. The Washington, DC, chapter of the WCTU held their meetings at several locations throughout their active years. The first meetings were held at Lincoln Hall at the corner of 9th and D Streets NW. By 1890, the chapter had its headquarters in the Lenman Building at 1425 New York Avenue NW

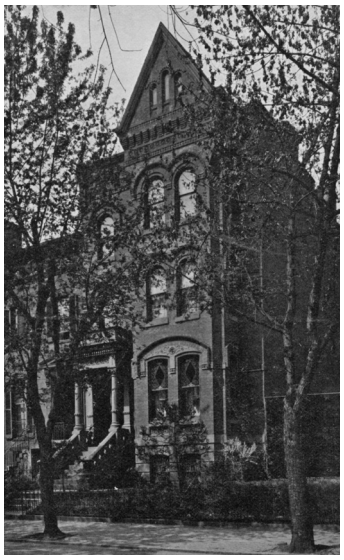

Figure 3-2. Women's Christian Temperance Union headquarters at 522 6th Street NW, demolished (StreetsofWashington).

[1] "Ringing Resolutions," *The National Republican*, January 25, 1883, 2.

Figure 3-3. Above left: New Jersey delegates in front of the NAWSA headquarters in 1913. demolished (Library of Congress).

(demolished).[2] In the early 20th century through the 1920s the headquarters of the DC WCTU was located at 522 6th Street NW (demolished) (Figure 3-2). [3]

The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Established in 1890 with the merger of the AWSA and the NWSA. Twenty years after the split between AWSA and NWSA, the two organizations agreed to merge; by this time, the differences that had led to the break were largely smoothed over and the two associations recognized they would be more effective working together. On February 18, 1890, at the Lincoln Music Hall at 9th and D Streets NW, in Washington, DC, AWSA and NWSA formally united. Although Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1890-1892) and Susan B. Anthony (1892-1900) were the first two presidents of the organization, their influence in the movement was waning as a new generation of suffragists began to supplant them. Over Anthony's objections, the organization began to hold its convention every other year in a location other than Washington, DC. Although NAWSA maintained an office in the District at 1420 F Street NW (demolished) (Figure 3-3), its headquarters was located elsewhere, eventually establishing a permanent base in New York City in 1910. Following Anthony's

2 "A White Ribbon Army," *Evening Star*, 24 May 1890:11.
3 "Mrs. Shelton Delegate to W.C.T.U. Meet," *Evening Star*, 11 November 1922:28.

Figure 3-4. Above right: Members of the GFWC at their headquarters at 1734 N Street NW ca. 1924 (Library of Congress).

retirement from the presidency in 1900, the organization was led first by Carrie Chapman Catt (1900-1904), then Anna Howard Shaw (1904-1915), and then again by Catt (1915-1920). NAWSA's early strategy focused on a state-by-state approach and supporting any political candidate who endorsed suffrage, regardless of party. This eventually resulted in the separation of the Congressional Union, led by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, which became the National Woman's Party. NAWSA under Catt's second presidency refocused its efforts on the national amendment in the latter stages of the campaign. Following ratification of the 19th Amendment, NAWSA reorganized as the National League of Women Voters (reorganized again in 1947 as the League of Women Voters of the United States) to assist women in exercising their right to vote. For local organizations connected to NAWSA, see below.

General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC). Founded in 1890 by Jane Cunningham Croly as an umbrella organization for literary and professional women's clubs. The organization later expanded to include organizations dedicated to progressive causes. It was the largest national woman's organization until it was overtaken by NAWSA in the early 1900s. The GFWC's membership initially rejected a proposal supporting suffrage, but after a delegation of clubwomen marched in the 1913 suffrage parade in Washington, DC, the organization voted in 1914 to endorse the right of

Figure 3-5. Nineteenth Street Baptist Church at 19th and I Streets NW in 1975, demolished (Library of Congress).

Figure 3-6. NACWC headquarters at 1601 R Street NW (DC Office of Planning).

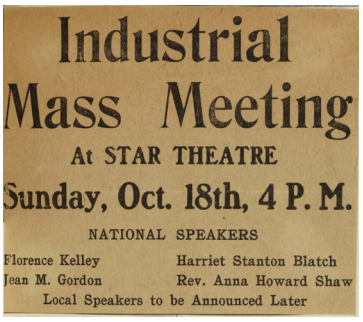

Figure 3-7. Notice of a mass meeting of the College Equal Suffrage League, 1908 (Library of Congress).

women to vote.[4] The GFWC moved to its first permanent headquarters in 1922, the Miles Mansion located at 1734 N Street NW (Figure 3-4).

National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Formed on July 21, 1896, by the merger of the National Federation of Afro-American Women and the Colored Women's League of Washington, DC (see below), during a meeting at the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church (demolished) (Figure 3-5). The NACW was an umbrella organization for Black women's reform clubs working to improve economic and living conditions for Black people and advocating for civil rights. Mary Church Terrell was the first president of the NACW; other prominent members included Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Helen A. Cook, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Ida Wells-Barnett, Charlotte Forten Grimké, and Margaret Murray Washington. Under Terrell's leadership, the NACW became a leader in the anti-lynching and anti-segregation movements and championed varied causes from child care and education to job training and wage equity to retirement homes. Terrell was also active in NAWSA, and in 1912 the NACW endorsed women's suffrage. Although Black women were often excluded from or marginalized in the predominately White women's suffrage movement, Terrell and Wells-Barnett both participated in the 1913 suffrage parade in Washington, DC. The organization changed its name in 1914 to the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC). The organization advocated not only for women's suffrage but to ensure the voting rights of Black men, who were regularly denied access to the ballot, especially in the South. Following ratification of the 19th Amendment, the NACWC also worked for Black women's voting rights. Mary McLeod Bethune, who served as NACWC president from 1924–1928, helped the organization purchase its first national headquarters at 1114 O Street NW (demolished) in 1928. The NACWC purchased its current headquarters at 1601 R Street NW in 1954 (Figure 3-6).

College Equal Suffrage League (Figure 3-7). Conceived by Maud Wood Park while attending the 1900 NAWSA convention in Washington, DC, as a suffrage organization for college women. Realizing that she was the youngest delegate at the meeting, Park decided to create an organization to engage young women in the suffrage movement. Park teamed with Inez Haynes Irwin to found the CESL and recruit high school and college students as well as recent graduates. The organization incorporated as an official branch of NAWSA in 1908 and a DC branch formed in 1909; Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, and Elsie Hill, all later leaders in the National Woman's Party, were involved in the CESL in 1913. The CESL disbanded in 1917.

[4] "Votes for Women," *WHRC News*, Summer 2019. Accessed August 2021, https://www.gfwc.org/summer-2019/.

The National Woman's Party (Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage). Originated as the Congressional Committee of NAWSA in 1912 to concentrate on the federal amendment. Led by Burns and Paul, the Congressional Committee organized one of the signature events of the suffrage movement, the 1913 march along Pennsylvania Avenue. Following that event, Burns and Paul converted the committee to the Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage, a separate organization but still affiliated with NAWSA. The CU's commitment to the federal amendment and its strategy of holding the party in power solely accountable for the progress of the amendment clashed with NAWSA's leadership, and in 1914 the CU formally split from NAWSA. In 1916 it reorganized as the National Woman's Party, and in early 1917 it instituted a new tactic: aggressively picketing the White House to shame President Wilson into supporting the amendment. The party's focus on the federal amendment and its employment of the city as a battleground in the fight for suffrage brought the movement to the District in a much more immediate way than in the past. Following the ratification of the 19th Amendment, the NWP remained a women's rights organization focused on the passage of an Equal Rights Amendment.

Figure 3-8. National Woman's Party at Cameron House ca. 1910-1920 (Library of Congress).

From 1914 to 1922 the NWP was headquartered in a series of rented buildings near the White House, including the Cameron House (1916–1918) (Figure 3-8) and 14 Jackson Place (1918–1922) (demolished) (Figure 3-9). In 1922 it moved to the "Old Brick Capitol" at 21–25 1st Street NE (demolished) (Figure 3-10) but was forced to move again when the federal government acquired the property for the site of the new Supreme Court Building. With the condemnation money and further assistance from Alva Belmont, the party purchased a building at what is now 144 Constitution Avenue NE and moved there in 1929; this is the current Belmont–Paul Women's Equality National Monument.

Figure 3-9. National Woman's Party Headquarters at 14 Jackson Place ca. 1918-1920, demolished (Library of Congress).

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Woman Suffrage Association of the District of Columbia. Founded as the Universal Franchise Association in 1866 to advocate for women's suffrage. The organization changed its name to the Woman Suffrage Association of the District of Columbia in 1876. The organization was associated with the NWSA until the latter's merger with AWSA in 1890 and acted as the local host for the national convention beginning in 1870. Founding members included Josephine White Griffing, Belva Lockwood, Sara A. Spencer, Caroline B. Winslow, and Susan Edson. Lockwood and Edson both served as presidents in the 19th century. The organization also campaigned for other women's rights issues, including equality in education and employment.[5]

Figure 3-10. National Woman's Party Headquarters at the Old Brick Capitol in 1928, demolished (Library of Congress).

[5] "Suffrage Society Here is Pioneer Equality Advocate,"

Figure 3-11. Colored Women's League of Washington, DC, 1894, on the front porch of Frederick Douglass's house (Library of Congress).

Colored Women's Progressive Franchise Association. Founded in 1880 by Mary Ann Shadd Cary at Mt. Pisgah Chapel on R Street NW. The organization's purpose was stated at its first meeting as "...the discussion of the franchise question and the practical extensions of privileges and measures for public good without sex discrimination."[6] Although the organization does not appear to have survived for long, it was likely the earliest attempt to create a suffrage organization for Black women in the city.

Colored Women's League of Washington, DC (CWL). Founded in 1892 as a local organization with the eventual goal to create a national coalition of Black women's organizations. The organization's president was Helen Appo Cook. Other founding members were Josephine Bruce, Anna Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, Charlotte Forten Grimké, Coralie Franklin Cook, and Mary Jane Patterson (Figure 3-11). It had a broad mission to

The Washington Times, July 22, 1914, 7.

[6] "Colored Women's Professional Franchise Assn" (2020). Organizations. 1. https://dh.howard.edu/mscary_org/1. Accessed August 2021.

Figure 3-12. Above left: Portner apartment building at 15th Street and U Streets NW, demolished (StreetsofWashington).

Figure 3-13. Above right: DC Central Public Library in 1906 (Library of Congress).

promote "the education and improvement of colored women and...their interests" and in its early years held lectures and operated a sewing school for girls. In July 1896 the CWL merged with the National Federation of Afro American Women to form the National Association of Colored Women.

State Equal Suffrage Association of the District of Columbia. Organized in 1898 as the District's state auxiliary of NAWSA as an umbrella for local organizations. At its founding, SESA included two groups: the District Suffrage Association and the Junior Equal Suffrage Club. Later additions were the Stanton Suffrage Club, the Anthony League, and the Equal Franchise League. A history of the organization noted that its work was of "an altruistic nature" since there was no franchise in the District, but in 1917, SESA inaugurated a suffrage for the District campaign. Following ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, SESA reorganized to continue its work to secure the franchise for DC residents, moved to an individual membership model, and agreed to admit men.[7] Newspaper articles indicate that in 1912–1913 the State Equal Suffrage Association and the Anthony League had their headquarters in the Portner apartment building, located at the intersection of 15th and U Streets NW (demolished) (Figure 3-12).[8]

Stanton Suffrage Club. Founded in 1901 as the "Elizabeth Cady Stanton Political Study Club" to study politics, including civil and municipal government, taxation, and equal employment. Under President Anna C. Kelton (later wife of Dr. Harvey W. Wiley), the organization renamed itself the Stanton Suffrage Club to reflect a focus on suffrage advocacy. By 1914 the organization had

7 "Truths By Women Who Know: Altruism a Factor in Fight for Citizenship," *Washington Times*, July 3, 1914; "The Town Crier," *Washington Herald*, December 4, 1917, 3; "Suffrage Body Is Reorganized," *Evening Star*, December 1, 1920, 17.

8 "Urge Mrs. Wiley's Name," Evening Star, 27 September 1912: 22; "Women Eye Congress," *Washington Post*, 19 July 1912:2.

over 400 members and hosted speakers including Dr. Wiley, senators and congressmen, Lucy Burns, and other suffrage leaders; raised money to assist suffrage campaigns in other states; distributed suffrage literature; and found suffrage speakers for conventions held in the District. In the 1910s, the organization primarily met at the Central Public Library (Figure 3-13). Following ratification of the 19th amendment, the organization either disbanded or reformed under a different purpose; the last mention of its activities was its contribution to the bust of Elizabeth Cady Stanton later placed in the crypt of the Capital. Nina Allender was briefly president of the organization before moving to the State Equal Suffrage Association of DC.[9]

[9] "Truths by Women Who Know: Progressive Methods Used in Propaganda," *Washington Times*, July 11, 1914, 4; "Urges Bills in Congress," *Evening Star,* December 16, 1911, 9; "Ballot for Women," *Evening Star,* 25 January 1912: 22. .

Theme 4: Intersectionality and the Women's Suffrage Movement

OVERVIEW

Intersectionality is a framework identified in 1989 by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, a professor at Columbia Law School, to capture the multi-dimensional experiences of women of color (specifically Black women in Crenshaw's analysis, but the concept applies to other women of color) where racism and sexism intersect. Crenshaw argues that it is impossible to separate Black women's experiences of racism and sexism; they experience sexism in a manner that is fundamentally different from that of White women.[1]

The historic context and significance of civil rights in Washington, DC, has been established in the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form "20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C., 1912-1974."[2] This chapter looks specifically at the experiences of women of color and gender role nonconforming women within the context of the suffrage movement (see Introduction for research limitations on this theme).

WOMEN OF COLOR AND THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

Because the abolition and women's suffrage movements were closely allied during the early 19th century Black women, like their White counterparts, made similar connections between the subjection of Black people and the subjection of women. While Black women also developed leadership roles through their antislavery advocacy, they faced criticism of their activism as both women and Black Americans.

Seneca Falls, the opening event of the women's rights and suffrage movement, excluded Black women and all but one Black man, Frederick Douglass (Figure 4-1). Nevertheless, formerly enslaved and free Black women, as well as some Black men, assumed leadership positions and delivered powerful arguments in favor of women's suffrage in the years between the convention

1 Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (Volume 1989, Iss. 1, Article 8).

2 Sarah Jane Shoenfeld and Nakita Reed, National Register Multiple Property Documentation form, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C.*, 1912-1974; (December 2020).

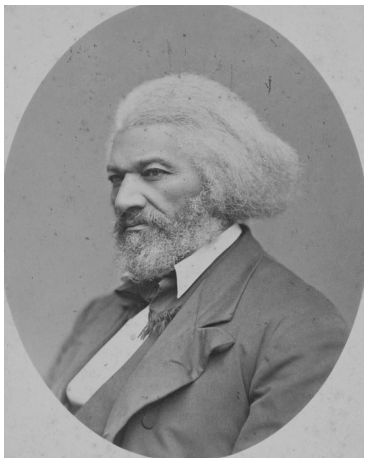

Figure 4-1. Frederick Douglass (Library of Congress).

Figure 4-2. Sojourner Truth (Library of Congress).

Figure 4-3. Charlotte Forten Grimké (Howard University).

and the Civil War. Sojourner Truth's 1851 address at the National Woman's Rights convention in Akron, Ohio, is justly famous, but less well known is that the famous rhetorical phrase "Ain't I a Woman?" may have been invented by a White journalist publishing the speech over ten years later to make Truth (Figure 4-2) sound like she was speaking in a Black Southern dialect.

Less well known are some of Truth's contemporaries who were vigorous advocates for all women's suffrage, including Maria W. Stewart, Sarah Remond and her brother Charles Lenox Remond, and Mary Ann Shadd Cary (whose residence in the District of Columbia is a National Historic Landmark). Members of the prominent Philadelphia antislavery Forten family including Charlotte Vandine Forten, her daughters Harriet Forten Purvis (who lived in DC the last two years of her life from 1873–1875), Margaretta Forten, and Sarah Forten Purvis were also among the first generation of Black women suffragists. A generation later, Charlotte Vandine Forten's granddaughter, Charlotte Forten Grimké (Figure 4-3), joined the movement and was one of the founders of the Colored Women's League of Washington, DC, in 1892 (see Figure 3-11). In Washington, DC, Grimké also mentored her niece, Angelina Weld-Grimké, and the prominent Black teacher, Anna Julia Cooper.

Black women faced more immediate consequences of intersectionality following the conclusion of the Civil War, when the suffrage movement fractured over the question of the 15th Amendment. They had participated in the founding and leadership of the new American Equal Rights Association (AERA) in 1866; Harriet Forten Purvis was a member of the AERA's executive committee, and both Sojourner Truth and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper spoke at the AERA's annual meetings. Yet when the proposed 15th Amendment would enfranchise Black men, but not women, a number of White leaders, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, refused to support a suffrage amendment that did not include women, used racially inflammatory language to make their arguments, and broke from the AERA to form the National Woman's Suffrage Association (NWSA). Alienated by the prioritization of White women's vote, some Black women, including Harper, chose to support an amendment that would at least provide some electoral power to members of their race. Harper and some other supporters of the 15th Amendment, including Charlotte Forten Grimké and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, all committed suffragists, joined the rival American Woman Suffrage Association, which supported both Black and woman suffrage.

Other Black women chose to align themselves with the NWSA, believing that the organization's federal amendment strategy was the best route to universal woman suffrage, but it remained a difficult alliance. In 1876, Mary Ann Shadd

Cary requested on behalf of 94 Black women of Washington, DC, that the NWSA include them as signers of the Declaration of the Rights of Women, a commemoration published by NWSA on the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, which demanded the immediate enfranchisement of American women. NWSA declined to include the names of the Black women, but Cary continued to work with the organization.[3]

Figure 4-4. Mary Church Terrell (Library of Congress).

In the second half of the 19th century, Black women developed parallel approaches to suffrage, particularly as part of their social and economic reform work including issues like lynching, temperance, equality of employment and education, and civil rights. While women like Mary Church Terrell (Figure 4-4 and Figure 4-5) and Coralie Franklin Cook often found common cause within predominately White organizations like the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), the general exclusion of Black women's concerns and their relegation to segregated auxiliaries in organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) led to the formation of Black women's organizations such as Mary Ann Shadd Cary's Colored Women's Progressive Franchise Association, the National Association of Colored Women, and the Equal Suffrage League. Across the country, Black women worked through local and regional suffrage clubs to mobilize supporters, petition legislators, and publicize their positions in both the Black and White press. These groups afforded Black women a national platform for advocacy.

Figure 4-5. Mary Church Terrell House at 326 T Street NW in 1933 (Library of Congress).

As the women's suffrage movement entered its second generation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, White-dominated local and national suffrage organizations faced a dilemma: how to incorporate the growing power of Black women's actions and voices while also placating Southern White women opposed to racial equality. These organizations often claimed racial inclusivity and at times provided opportunities for Black women to participate. In 1898 Mary Church Terrell, in a speech at NAWSA's annual meeting in Washington, DC, stated the specific challenges that Black women faced.

> When one considers the obstacles encountered by colored women in their effort to educate and cultivate themselves, since they became free, the

[3] Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1950-1920* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 41.

> work they have accomplished and the progress they have made will bear favorable comparison, at least with that of their more fortunate sisters, from whom the opportunity of acquiring knowledge and the means of self-culture have never been entirely withheld. Not only are colored women with ambition and aspiration handicapped on account of their sex, but they are almost everywhere baffled and mocked because of their race. Not only because they are women, but because they are colored women, are discouragement and disappointment meeting them at every turn.[4]

Terrell concluded her speech on a more optimistic note, praising the progress that women of her race had made in the past decades. Two years later, NAWSA invited Coralie Franklin Cook to represent Black women at their celebration of Susan B. Anthony's 80th birthday. Cook diplomatically reminded her audience that "no woman and no class of woman can be degraded and all women kind not suffer thereby."[5] Adella Hunt Logan, another Black suffragist who was also a member of NAWSA, in 1905 explicitly expressed the greater urgency of the vote for Black Americans, stating, "If white American women, with all their natural and acquired advantages, need the ballot, that right protective of all other rights; if Anglo Saxons have been helped by it... how much more do black Americans, male and female need the strong defense of a vote to help secure them their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?"[6]

However, these opportunities represented at best a token presence for Black women in White-dominated organizations, and Cook, Terrell, and their fellow Black suffragists continued to struggle against the boundaries placed by White suffragists to limit their full participation in the movement. This was vividly illustrated during one of the seminal events of the suffrage movement, the March 1913 suffrage parade in Washington, DC.

The previous year, two young White suffragists, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, had revitalized the push for a Constitutional amendment by forming a Congressional Committee within NAWSA focused on pressuring the legislature and president to pass the Anthony Amendment, which had been moribund since 1896. To inaugurate their campaign, Burns, Paul, and a few other colleagues decided to hold a suffrage parade down Pennsylvania Avenue on March 3, 1913, the day before the inauguration of the new president, Woodrow Wilson. In addition to bands, floats, and other typical parade elements, marchers would be grouped into themed sections representing nations, professional groups,

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4 Mary Church Terrell, "The Progress of Women: An Address Delivered before the National American Woman's Suffrage Association at the Columbia Theater, Washington, DC, February 18, 1898." Washington, DC: Smith Brothers Printers, 1898.

5 Quoted in Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 69.

6 Adella Hunt Logan, "Woman Suffrage," Colored American Magazine no. 3 (September 1905): 487, quoted in Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 60–61

state delegations, and others. Naturally, Black women expected to be represented, but organizers, especially Alice Paul, feared that an integrated march would alienate Southern White women and create racial strife along the march line. After initially attempting to spread a few Black women out within friendly Northern delegations, Paul later decided to segregate Black women into a section at the rear of the parade. In an oral history many years after the event, Paul claimed that she did this to protect Black women from harassment by placing them between protective men's groups (see Chapter 1 for more details on the 1913 suffrage parade).[7]

Figure 4-6. Bertha Pitts Campbell (right) and Osceola Macarthy Adams (left), co-founders of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority at Howard University. Delta members were told to stay in a segregated section when they joined the march for suffrage in 1913 (Washington State Archives).

Nevertheless, a number of Black women did participate in the parade. The largest delegation was a group of 25 members of Howard University's Black sorority Delta Sigma Theta, led by their founder Osceola Macarthy Adams (Figure 4-6). The banner carriers for the Michigan and New York delegations were Black women. Ida B. Wells-Barnett famously waited at the side of the march and stepped into the line with her fellow Illinois suffragists when they passed (Figure 4-7). The journal of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) *The Crisis* noted after the parade that “In spite of the apparent reluctance of the local suffrage committee to encourage the colored women to participate, and in spite of the conflicting rumors that were circulated and which disheartened many of the colored women from taking part, they are to be congratulated that so many of them had the courage of their convictions and that they made such an admirable showing in the first great national parade."[8] Terrell, who marched along with the Black delegation, was less generous, later telling the NAACP's Walter White that she believed White suffrage leaders would pass the federal amendment without giving the Black women the vote if they could get away with it.[9]

In 1915, *The Crisis* featured a number of essays from participants in a symposium on "Votes for Women" expressing multiple viewpoints on the

7 Mary Walton, *A Woman’s Crusade: Alice Paul and the Battle for the Ballot* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 63,64; Alice Paul interview cited in Christine Lunardini, “From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: The National Woman’s Party, 1913-1923,” PhD diss. (Princeton University, 1981), 69.

8 “Suffrage Paraders,” The Crisis (NAACP), April 1913; Walton, *A Woman’s Crusade*, 77.

9 Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds. *African American Women: Struggles and Images* (Black Classic Press 1978), 25..

Figure 4-7. Ida B. Wells-Barnett at the 1913 Suffrage Parade (Chicago Daily Tribune).

case for Black women's suffrage. Mary B. Talbert, then vice president of NACW, highlighted the intersectionality of suffrage for Black women, that "this struggle becomes two-fold, first, because we are women and second, because we are colored women." Terrell called out her fellow Black men for opposing women's suffrage, scoffing "What could be more absurd and ridiculous than that one group of individuals who are trying to throw off the yoke of oppression themselves, so as to get relief from conditions which handicap and injure them, should favor laws and customs which impede the progress of another unfortunate group and hinder them in every conceivable way." Lafayette M. Hershaw, writing about the general disenfranchisement of all citizens of the District of Columbia, stated that "In the District of Columbia where neither man nor woman votes, the woman is as worthy a member of the community as the man. If Congress should reenact suffrage in the District it is difficult to see how it could except women from the exercise without fixing upon them an undeserved stigma."[10]

Terrell's status as one of the few influential Black women in NAWSA put her in an awkward position late in the campaign for the 19th Amendment. In March 1919, NAWSA leadership asked Terrell to persuade the Northeastern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs to temporarily withdraw their request for NAWSA affiliate membership until after the amendment was ratified, fearing that it would represent an obstacle to White Southern support at a critical moment in the campaign. Terrell refused, and the Northeastern Federation's leaders sharply criticized NAWSA for what they saw as the real issue: NAWSA's indifference to whether Black women obtained the vote alongside White women.[11]

[10] Mary Talbert, "Women and Colored Women," Mary Church Terrell, "Woman Suffrage and the 15th Amendment," and Lafayette M. Hershaw, "Disenfranchisement and the District of Columbia," *The Crisis*, no. 4 (August 1915), 183-191.

[11] Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 130-131.

Following the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, Black women rejoiced along with White women, but recognized that Black women now faced the same difficulties that Black men did in actually exercising that right. Black women's experiences in the voting rights movement after the 19th Amendment are discussed more fully in Theme 5, but it is important to note that suffrage organizations that pivoted to more general women's rights issues continued to marginalize Black women, citing many of the same reasons they had prior to the amendment's ratification. Throughout the 1920s, for example, the National Woman's Party struggled to reconcile the intersection of race and gender. Its 1921 convention, at which the party considered its future advocacy work, was marked by debate before the convention on how Black women should be included in the program, and during the convention itself by the party leadership's indifference to violations of the 19th Amendment that disenfranchised Black women, which they saw as a race issue not a women's rights issue.[12]

Black women were not the only women to both participate in the women's suffrage movement and experience discrimination within it. These women also faced additional complications related to the unique status of certain groups within American politics and culture, as well as difficulties consequent to their citizenship status both before and after the 19th Amendment.

For Indigenous women, voting rights were inextricably entwined with tribal sovereignty, but they also had a significant influence on the early suffrage movement. Scholars of women's rights have in recent years explored the influences of the tribal status of women on early White suffragists. Women like Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage observed the Indigenous women in their region, particularly the Haudenosaunee, and read about tribal cultures where women maintained their own identity and rights within the tribe, particularly political equality in governing decisions. White suffragists used this to argue that inequality and subjection of women was not a natural condition and that this aspect of Indigenous culture was a model for social and political equality within White American society.[13] Throughout the women's suffrage movement, suffragists sought Indigenous women to participate in events and speak to the status of women within their tribes.

[12] Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*,155-156.

[13] Sally Roesch Wagner, "How Native American Women Inspired the Women's Rights Movement," *On Their Shoulders: The Radical Stories of Women's Fight for the Vote*, April 17, 2020, accessed August 2021, https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/how-native-american-women-inspired-the-women-s-rights-movement.htm

However, while White suffragists were willing to use Indigenous women as an argument for White woman suffrage, they were less eager to treat them as equals in the movement. In 1891, NAWSA's Anna Howard Shaw used her perception of the condition of Indigenous people to position White women as more deserving of suffrage, denigrating Dakota people in South Dakota who engaged in cultural practices such as ghost dancing while "the white women were going up and down in the State pleading for the rights of citizens."[14]

Figure 4-8. Marie Bottineau Baldwin (Library of Congress).

Indigenous women also engaged with the suffrage movement on their own terms. They took advantage of the platform afforded to them by speaking opportunities to discuss Indigenous concerns like treaty rights and citizenship. Many Indigenous women struggled with tensions between their traditional cultures and the pressure placed on them during this period to assimilate into the dominant culture. Marie Louise Bottineau Baldwin (Metis/Turtle Mountain Chippewa) had moved to Washington, DC, in the 1890s to work with her father on treaty rights and eventually became the first woman of color to graduate from the Washington College of Law (Figure 4-8). She also was active in the women's suffrage movement and participated in the 1913 suffrage parade, marching with a group of White woman lawyers, and using the publicity to speak about the political roles of Indigenous women. Although Baldwin had initially believed in assimilation as a survival tactic, by the time she was active in the suffrage movement, she was increasingly emphasizing her dual identity as a modern Metis woman.[15]

During the women's suffrage movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Indigenous people, both men and women, were prevented from voting in federal elections because they were not citizens, and the 15th Amendment was specifically interpreted to exclude Indigenous men. Following the passage of

[14] Quoted in Teresa Zackodnik, "Reaching Toward a Red-Black Coalitional Feminism," in Cheryl Suzack et. al., Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, and Culture (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2010), 114.

[15] "Marie Louise Bottineau Baldwin," Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, accessed August 2021, https://www.nps.gov/people/marie-louise-bottineau-baldwin.htm.

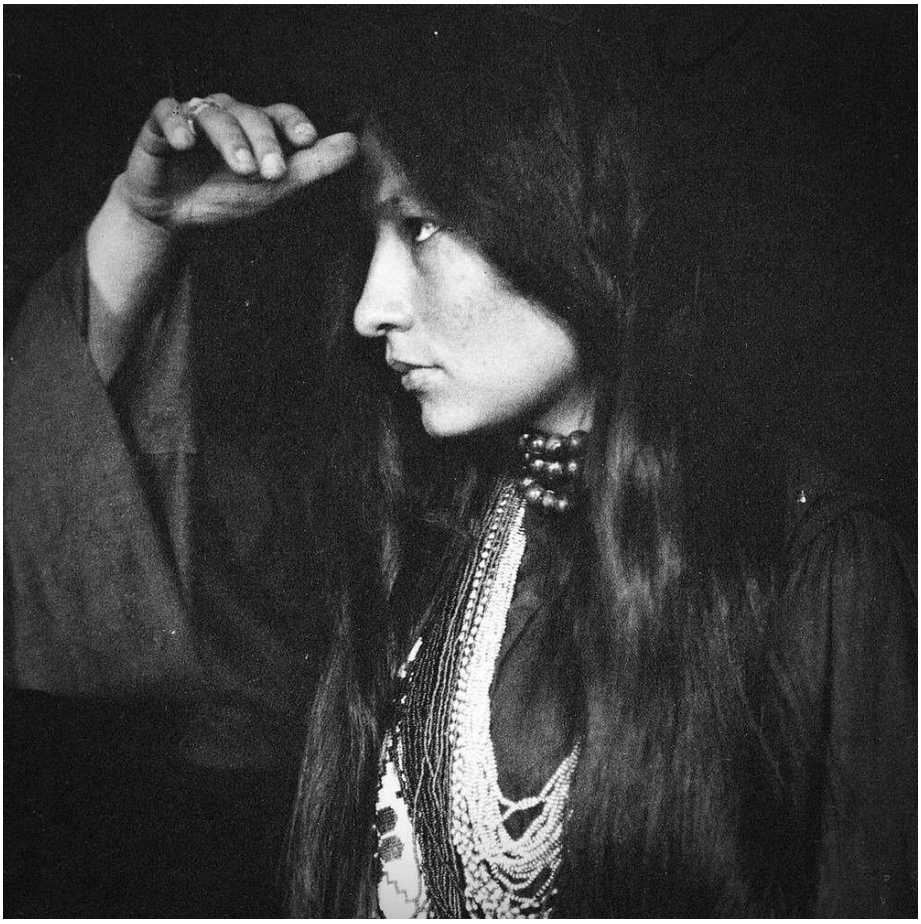

Figure 4-9. Zitkála-Šá (Public Domain).

the 19th Amendment, Indigenous women remained disenfranchised because their citizenship status was still dictated by tribal status relative to sovereignty. The Snyder Act of 1924 recognized all Indigenous people as United States citizens, but some states used the same tactics developed to prevent Black people from voting to also disenfranchise tribal members.[16] Indigenous activist Zitkála-Šá (Yankton Dakota Sioux, also called Red Bird/Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) and her husband founded the National Council of American Indians in 1926 to promote Indigenous suffrage, worked with White suffrage organizations, and organized voter registration drives for Indigenous people (Figure 4-9). Zitkála-Šá also spoke at the National Woman's Party 1921 convention to support the party's reorganization to advocate for women's legal equality.[17]

Like Indigenous women, Asian women also faced barriers to suffrage related to citizenship. From the 19th century to the mid-20th century, a variety of laws barred Asian immigrants from acquiring citizenship, and thus voting rights. Birthright citizenship for Asian Americans was not upheld until the

[16] Susan Cianci Salvatore, "Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights, A National Historic Landmark Theme Study," National Park Service, Revised 2009, 78-87.

[17] " Zitkala-Ša (Red Bird / Gertrude Simmons Bonnin)," accessed August 2021, https://www.nps.gov/people/zitkala-sa.htm.

Figure 4-10. Sofia Reyes de Veyra (Library of Congress).

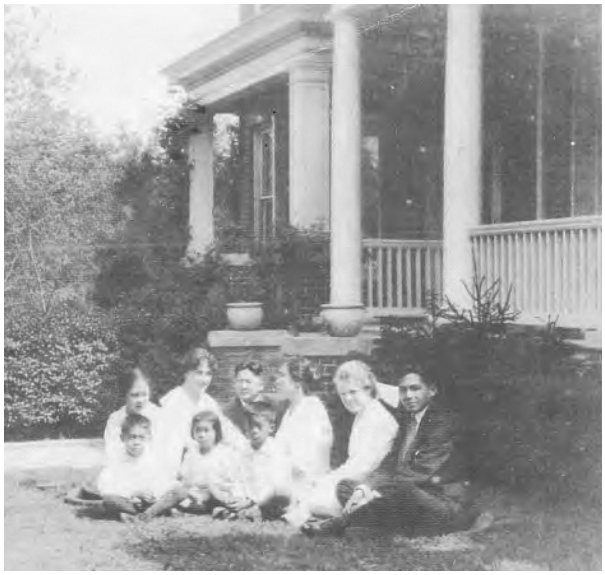

Figure 4-11. Sofia Reyes de Vevra and her family at their home at 2610 Cathedral Avenue NW in 1917 (Teresa de Veyra-Montilla, "A Journey In Time With My Grandma").

1882 Supreme Court decision in *US v. Wong Kim Ark*. In general the serious discrimination Asian Americans experienced in immigration, citizenship, employment, education, and housing meant that suffrage and voting rights were not a significant focus of civil rights activism prior to 1965.[18] However, Asian American women did participate in the suffrage movement. Among them was Sofia Reyes de Veyra, a Filipino native who lived in Washington, DC, from 1917–1923 with her family at 2610 Cathedral Avenue NW while her husband was Resident Commissioner representing the Philippines, then a US colony (Figure 4-10 and Figure 4-11). Reyes knew Carrie Chapman Catt from a visit the latter paid to the Philippines in 1912, and was invited to attend NAWSA's convention in DC in 1917. She also was a delegate to the National Woman's Party convention in 1921. Reyes' experience led her to campaign for women's suffrage after returning to the Philippines.[19] In the 1920s, the National Woman's Party campaigned to extend women's suffrage to the women of Puerto Rico, another American territory, with a limited suffrage bill passed in 1929.

GENDER ROLE NON-CONFORMING WOMEN AND THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

From the beginning of the suffrage movement, many opponents of suffrage portrayed the women of the movement as objects of ridicule for their rejection of prevailing gender norms. Suffragists were characterized as rejecting marriage, family, and the home, and claiming male privilege they were not entitled to. Thus, suffragists were rejecting or not conforming to socially prescribed gender roles, stereotypes, and norms.

While some movement leaders sought to combat this by foregrounding happily married wives and mothers,

[18] Susan Cianci Salvatore, "Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights, A National Historic Landmark Theme Study," National Park Service, Revised 2009, 114-117.

[19] Titchie Carandang-Tiongson, "Biographical Sketch of Sofia Reyes de Veyra," Biographical Database of NAWSA Suffragists, 1890-1920, Alexander Street Documents. Accessed August 2021, https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1009656501; Teresa de Veyra-Montilla, "A Journey In Time With My Grandma," accessed online 2 December 2021 at http://www.positivelyfilipino.com/magazine/a-journey-in-time-with-my-grandma.

as well as young, beautiful women, as the faces of the movement, other suffragists welcomed the opportunity that challenging gender norms offered to improve their lives. Because women's intimate relationships with other women existed on a continuum, and sexual matters were generally kept private, it is difficult to label 19th- and early 20th-century women by modern conceptions of gender and sexual identity. However, it is also clear that the suffrage movement provided space for women to develop supportive connections with their colleagues that may have included couple relationships. Leaders like Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Anna Howard Shaw had decades-long partnerships with women, often living together in what were euphemistically called "romantic friendships" or "Boston marriages."

Figure 4-12. Dr. Susan Edson (Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 1880, Library of Congress)

Some of these women also had partnerships or marriages with men; again, it is difficult to apply modern terms like bisexual without being able to hear directly from the women themselves. Susan Edson, a leader in the DC suffrage movement and the personal physician of President Garfield, remained single her entire life (Figure 4-12). However, she developed an intensely close relationship with her fellow physician and suffragist Caroline B. Winslow, who was married. Alice Dunbar Nelson, a Black field organizer in the suffrage movement who was briefly married to the Black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, was married three times, but also reportedly had intimate relationships with women (Figure 4-13). In her diary Nelson described 'a thriving lesbian and bisexual subculture among Black suffragists and clubwomen."[20]

Figure 4-13. Alice Dunbar-Nelson (Alice Dunbar Nelson Papers, University of Delaware).

[20] Maya Salam, "How Queer Women Powered the Suffrage Movement," *New York Times*, August 14, 2020.

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Theme 5: After the 19th Amendment - Women, Voting Rights, and Political Activism in the District of Columbia (1920–1965)

OVERVIEW

After more than 70 years of struggle to achieve the right to vote for women, the ratification of the 19th Amendment in August 1920 was a pivotal moment. Several months later, many women were able to vote in a presidential election for the first time. However, for a large number of women exercising their new constitutional right was far from easy. Women had to overcome social norms that discouraged participation in voting. Politicians had to deploy new strategies to appeal to and reach women voters. More pressing, state and local governments had to add staff, resources, and equipment to accommodate the numbers of new voters in time for the November 1920 presidential election, only three months after ratification.[1] Even though women in 15 states already had the right to vote by 1920, many Americans, specifically politicians, did not know what to expect.[2] Without a centralized organizational structure in place, voting efforts were left to individual states, local jurisdictions, political parties, and nonpartisan organizations, all of which had different strategies. The result was an uneven registration process that led to different experiences for women depending on race, ethnicity, and geographic location.[3]

Women in Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi, for example, were not able to vote at all in the 1920 presidential election due to election laws that excluded individuals who failed to register to vote six months prior to the general election. Blocking women from voting was deliberate and a way to minimize participation in elections. Women faced literacy tests and poll taxes, intentional

1 J. Kevin Corder and Christina Wolbrecht, "Did Women Vote Once they had the Opportunity," *American Bar Association*, 2 December 2019, accessed 28 April 2020 at https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/publications/insights-on-law-and-society/volume-20/issue-1/did-women-vote-once-they-had-the-opportunity-/

2 Christina Wolbrecht and J. Kevin Corder, *A Century of Votes for Women* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 1.

3 Meilan Solly, "What the First Women Voters Experienced When Registering for the 1920 Election," *Smithsonian Magazine*, 30 July 2020, accessed at https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-first-women-voters-experienced-when-registering-1920-election-180975435/.

methods to keep Black, poor, and immigrant voters from participating in elections. Black women also faced outright intimidation and violence.[4]

After the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, suffrage organizations, formed to advocate for American women and their right to vote, struggled with what to do next. As explained by Page Harrington in *Interpreting the Legacy of Women's Suffrage,* "the powerful unified block of women voters that suffrage leaders had long hoped for failed to materialize. Instead, in the first twenty years after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, 'suffrage women retreated into their own special interests, organizations, and regional concerns, often taking opposing sides on policy issues.'"[5]

Some organizations and women dedicated to women's suffrage reorganized and shifted toward educating women about their newfound constitutional rights. Others fought to end voting restrictions and other tactics that kept women from the polls. NAWSA reorganized in 1920, before the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, as the League of Women Voters, and began their "mighty political experiment" to educate and register women to vote. The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, the oldest Black women's club in the country, "continued an unrelenting pursuit of full, unfettered citizenship for all people" while also battling discrimination during the Jim Crow era. The National Woman's Party reorganized in 1921 to campaign for equal rights in the United States and worldwide. More specifically, the NWP focused most of its efforts on lobbying for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, authored by founder Alice Paul in 1923, and "chose neither to participate in voter education programs nor accept the invitation to join Black women's efforts to fight against Jim Crow laws and lynching."[6]

Similar to the organizations of the suffrage movement, American women's organizations served to "legitimize the place of feminine values in public life, offering alternative forms of political activism to women who felt themselves to be excluded from mainstream male-dominated political life." These organizations created a meaningful link between women and the federal government and encouraged local activism at both state and civil levels. Although political, the organizations were also social in nature and bridged the gap between social and political worlds. As explained by Helen Laville in *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration 1945-*

4 Solly, "What the First Women Voters Experienced."
5 Page Harrington, *Interpreting the Legacy of Women's Suffrage at Museum and Historic Sites* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 18, 52.
6 Harrington, *Interpreting the Legacy of Women's Suffrage at Museum and Historic Sites*, 18.

1965, "This hybridity, while it contributed much to the continued vibrancy and authority of these groups, also meant that exclusionary social practices and, in particular, racial segregation, lay at the heart of women's voluntary associations." Thus, many national women's organizations and their local branches, although lacking any explicit rules or bylaws on racial segregation, remained exclusively or predominately White until the years following World War II and through 1965, when they were forced to confront their racial practices.[7]

The limitations of the 19th Amendment as well as discriminatory legislation enacted in the decades following its passage and ratification impacted many women of color and kept them disenfranchised (also see Theme 4). In 1924, Congress passed the Snyder Act, which granted citizenship to all Indigenous people in the United States. However, it left the decision of who could legally vote to individual states. Language barriers in addition to poll taxes and literacy tests particularly impacted Asian and Hispanic voters. Especially in the American Southwest, literacy tests served the same purpose as they did in the Deep South, "to allow election officials the instrument by which to exclude African Americans and Hispanics from political participation."[8]

Table 1. Key Voting Rights Events In the United States

DATE	EVENT
1870	The 15th Amendment grants Black men the right to vote.
1920	The 19th Amendments grants women the right to vote.
1924	The Indian Citizenship Act (Snyder Act) grants all Indigenous people born in the United States, regardless of tribal affiliation, citizenship and the right to vote.
1943	Congress repeals the Chinese Exclusion Act, which had barred Chinese immigrants from becoming citizens since 1882. Chinese immigrants and their families born in the United States become the first Asian Americans eligible to naturalize, gain citizenship, and vote.
1952	The Immigration and Nationality Act (McCarran Walter Act) grants all Asian Americans the right to citizenship and to vote.
1964	The passage of the 24th Amendment prohibits Poll Tax payments as a condition for voting in federal elections.
1965	The passage of the Voting Rights Act outlaws discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states after the Civil War, including literacy tests as a prerequisite to voting.

While the 19th Amendment was the formal milestone of the franchise, the reality was much different, particularly for Black women in the South. As Rosalyn Terborg-Penn concluded in *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, "Black women in the South were disfranchised in

7 Helen Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration 1945-1965* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 9-11.
8 Salvatore, *Civil Rights in America,* 105.

less than a decade after the Nineteenth Amendment enfranchised them."[9] The racial divisions present during the suffrage movement reemerged in women's political advocacy groups and once again, Black women faced both gender barriers and racial discrimination. Finding themselves excluded by predominately White organizations, Black women continued their independent efforts toward political equality and social reform through their churches, clubs, and academic institutions and pressed public officials, party leaders, and elections officers for change. Winning the vote for women took 72 years of advocacy, but for most Black women and other women of color it took another 45 years with the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.[10]

In the 1950s and 1960s, voting rights activism became entrenched in the modern civil rights movement, with organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC) and others leading the grassroots movement focused on voter registration in the South. The culmination of these efforts was the ratification of the 24th Amendment in January 1965, which formally abolished poll taxes and literacy tests as barriers to voting, and the passage of the Voting Rights Act in August 1965, 45 years after the 19th Amendment, which provided all women the right to vote. With its direct connection to the civil rights movement, the historic context and significance of voting rights in Washington, DC, has been established in the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form "20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C., 1912-1974."[11]

NATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN WASHINGTON, DC, AFTER THE 19TH AMENDMENT (1920–1965)

In the decades following the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, many women's organizations' platforms included educating women about voting and political processes. From their headquarters in Washington, DC, national organizations developed policy and directed efforts for state and local chapters. Many of these organizations also had local DC chapters that supported the agenda of the national organization.

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9 Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 11.

10 Liette Gidlow, " Not Our Problem: White Suffragists and Black Disfranchisement after Ratification," *American Historical Association*, accessed 3 September 2021 at https://aha.confex.com/aha/2020/webprogram/Paper27711.html; Page Harrington, *Interpreting the Legacy of Women's Suffrage at Museum and Historic Sites*, 18.

11 Sarah Jane Shoenfeld and Nakita Reed, National Register Multiple Property Documentation form, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C.*, 1912-1974; (December 2020).

Excluding the National Woman's Party, which moved its headquarters to Capitol Hill due to its juxtaposition to Congress, many women's organizations established their headquarters in Washington, DC, in or near the Dupont Circle neighborhood. The neighborhood's central location in proximity to the White House as well as Howard University made it attractive to both White and Black women's organizations. By the 1950s the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, the Women's National Democratic Club, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, as well as the Delta Sigma Theta and Zeta Phi Beta sororities all had headquarters in or near the Dupont Circle neighborhood.[12]

While the list of organizations below is not exhaustive, it includes national organizations that provided education platforms on voting and politics, encouraged women to vote and become involved in the political process, and/or fought for voting rights for women and other marginalized groups, particularly right after the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) reorganized in February 1920, shortly before the passage of the 19th Amendment. As the National League of Women Voters (renamed the League of Women Voters of the United States in 1947), the organization's new mission was to educate and assist women in exercising their new constitutional rights. After the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, organizations, particularly the League of Women Voters, educated and mobilized women voters and offered substantive

Figure 5-1. Headquarters of the League of Women Voters at 532 17th Street NW ca. 1920s, demolished (Library of Congress).

[12] Information provided by Vicky Marchard, Women's National Democratic Club Educational Foundation.

advice as well as practical demonstrations on skills (lever-pulling, ballot-filling) necessary to exercise the right to vote. Additionally, the major political parties created women's committees charged with mobilizing new women voters. As the novelty of suffrage passed, the League of Women Voters and political parties continued to mobilize women voters throughout the 1920s and 1930s.[13] The organization had its headquarters in Washington in several locations over the decades, including 532 17th Street NW in the 1920s (Figure 5-1).

In 1957, the League established the League of Women Voters Education Fund as it recognized the need for a separate non-profit educational organization for activities such as voter registration and information. The League of Women Voters Education Fund's goals were to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government as well as to increase the understanding of major policy issues.[14]

NATIONAL WOMAN'S PARTY

After the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1919–1920, the NWP reorganized and shifted its focus to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Authored by Alice Paul and Crystal Eastman in 1923 (rewritten by Paul in 1943), the goal of the ERA was to secure full equality for women and end legal distinctions between men and women in terms of divorce, property, employment, and other matters. Since the 19th Amendment did not protect any other rights for women, the NWP drafted the ERA as a "natural completion of the suffrage amendment."[15]

In 1922, the NWP moved its headquarters from Lafayette Square to 25 First Street NE, known as the “Old Brick Capitol,” to be closer to Congress where it could focus its national efforts on lobbying for laws that addressed women’s political, economic, and social inequality and the passage of the ERA. When the property was threatened by the construction of the United States Supreme Court Building, the NWP, with the help of prominent suffragist, president of the NWP, and benefactor Alva Belmont, purchased the brick house at the corner of Constitution Avenue (then B Street) and 2nd Street NE in 1929 to serve as its headquarters (Figure 5-2). The NWP’s new headquarters once again benefitted from its proximity to the Capitol and became the base for the NWP’s advocacy for the ERA.

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13 Wolbrecht and Corder, *A Century of Votes for Women,* 69.

14 League of Women Voters, "The League of Women Voters Through the Decades," accessed 21 December 2021 at https://www.lwv.org/league-women-voters-through-decades; League of Women Voters of Maine, "History of the League," accessed 21 December 2021 at https://www.lwvme.org/history.

15 Krafchik, "The National Woman's Party," 52.

Through the efforts of Alice Paul and the NWP, the ERA was introduced in every session of Congress from 1923 until its passage in 1972.[16] As explained by Jennifer Krafchik in *Interpreting the Legacy of Women's Suffrage,* "The decision to focus almost entirely on the ERA had long-lasting consequences for the NWP."[17] While women of color faced obstacles such as poll taxes, literacy tests, violence, and other tactics to prevent them from voting, "Alice Paul and the NWP chose not to support the fight for fair access to the ballot for all women. In doing so, they further alienated many women of color who had worked for suffrage and might have previously supported the NWP."[18] Through the 1940s and 1950s, the organization retained a small but active membership that fought for the passage of the ERA, a movement that gained momentum in the 1960s with the support of new women's organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW).

Figure 5-2. Headquarters of the National Woman's Party at 144 Constitution Avenue NE in 1929 (Library of Congress).

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORED WOMEN'S CLUBS

After 1920, when it became clear that the 19th Amendment was not being enforced, Black women raised the issue within their club networks and with their White allies. In 1921, National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC) co-founder Mary Church Terrell noted that not all Black women "live in those sections where their votes are counted." Elite Black club women, including Jennie B. Moton and Margaret Murray Washington, asked White allies in the Methodist Episcopal Church's Committee on Interracial Relations to help: "We believe that the ballot is the safe-guard of the Nation, and that every qualified citizen in the Nation should have the right to use it. We believe that if there is ever to be any Justice before the law, the Negro must have the right to exercise the vote. We ask, therefore, that white women, for the protection of their homes as well as ours, sanction the ballot for all citizens."[19]

Black women also reached out to former White suffragists for their support. While the League of Women Voters wanted to illustrate the success of women's suffrage and organized massive, nonpartisan voter campaigns in the 1920s, the national organization did not encourage Black women to join and failed

[16] When the deadline for ratification arrived on June 30, 1982, the amendment needed three additional states to reach the required 38 for ratification. To date, the ERA has not yet been ratified.
[17] Krafchik, "The National Woman's Party," 52.
[18] Krafchik, "The National Woman's Party," 52.
[19] Gidlow, *Resistance after Ratification: The Nineteenth Amendment, African American Women, and the Problem of Female Disfranchisement after 1920* (Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street, 2017).

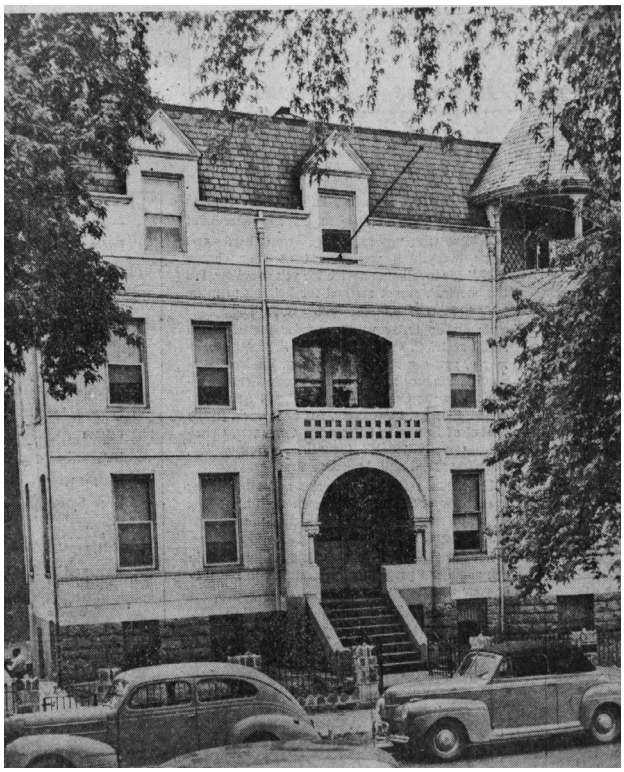

Figure 5-3. First permanent headquarters of the NACWC at 1114 O Street NW, demolished (Library of Congress).

to challenge the disfranchisement of Black women in the South. Additionally, the National Woman's Party refused to take up "race questions" and insisted that discrimination faced by Black women was outside its mission. Despite the rejection from organizations that should have been the most eager to help, Black women continued to advocate for voting rights. In 1925, Mary Church Terrell urged NACWC members to learn about candidates and pending legislation, write to members of Congress to convey their opinions, and learn from others with more political experience.[20]

In 1928, the NACWC, under the leadership of the organization's president Mary McLeod Bethune, purchased its first national headquarters at 1114 O Street NW (demolished). Prior to this, the organization moved its headquarters every few years. The new headquarters illustrated the organization's permanence and importance in Washington, DC.[21] The organization purchased its current headquarters at 1601 R Street NW in 1954.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN

In her book, *Mary McLeod Bethune & Black Women's Political Activism*, Joyce A. Hanson explains, “As legal and customary segregation became more widespread, black women increasingly saw the importance of establishing a national organization to systematically address social segregation, economic inequality, and political disenfranchisement.”[22] The National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) joined a growing number of women's organizations that focused on women's rights in general or, in the case of the NCNW, Black women's rights, but also included voting education and rights in their platforms. The National Council of Negro Women, founded by Mary McLeod Bethune in 1935, was one of at least 30 national organizations founded by Black women between 1895 and 1935. These organizations, including college-based sororities and religious, political, and professional organizations, sought to address issues faced by and that were relevant to Black women.[23]

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20 Gidlow, *Resistance after Ratification.*.

21 LaVonne Leslie, ed., *"Lifting As We Climb:" The History of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc., A Legacy of Service* (Xlibris Corporation, 2012).

22 Joyce A. Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune & Black Women’s Political Activism* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press), 99.

23 Bettye Collier-Thomas, *N.C.N.W, 1935-1980* (Washington, DC: National Council of Negro Women, 1981), 1.

Figure 5-4. (Left) Portrait of Mary McLeod Bethune (Right) Photograph of the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, 1318 Vermont Avenue NW (Library of Congress).

From 1924 until 1928 Mary McLeod Bethune served as president of the NACWC. After the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 and as segregation and anti-Black violence escalated, Bethune began to focus her efforts on making universal advances in the status of Black Americans. As NACWC president, Bethune challenged the organization to take a more active role in the legislative process and tried to make the NACWC the central organization for studying and advocating for Black women's political concerns.[24] Believing that the views and goals of the NACWC were dated and not keeping pace with modern political realities, Mary McLeod Bethune established the NCNW as a national organization to unite all Black women's organizations across the country. Bethune recognized that a unified voice would create a larger impact on issues affecting women, particularly Black women.[25] In 1943, the NCNW purchased a rowhouse at 1318 Vermont Avenue NW to serve as the Council's first national headquarters (Figure 5-4). The new headquarters solidified the presence of the Council and Black women in the nation's capital. One of the major goals of the NCNW was removing voting restrictions, an issue that the NCNW had been involved in as early as 1940 when Bethune joined the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax (NCAPT). The NCNW encouraged African Americans to vote, regardless of party affiliation, and directed its local affiliates to stimulate voting in their communities.[26]

After Bethune's retirement in 1949, the NCNW continued its mission under the leadership of Dr. Dorothy Ferebee (1949–1953), Vivian Carter Mason (1953–1957), and Dorothy Irene Height (1957–1997). Dorothy Height led the organization during the 1960s, as racial violence in the South increased and the Council shifted its focus to the civil rights movement.[27] In October 1963, Height,

24 Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune & Black Women's Political Activism*, 119.
25 Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune & Black Women's Political Activism*, 165.
26 Elaine M. Smith, *Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Council of Negro Women: Pursuing a True and Unfettered Democracy,* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2003), 249-253.
27 Rebecca Tuuri, *Strategic Sisterhood: The National Council of Negro Women in the Black*

along with former NCNW president Dorothy Ferebee, White freedom rider and president of the National Women's Committee on Civil Rights Shirley Smith, and White volunteer member of the NCNW Polly Cowan, traveled to Selma, Alabama to investigate the violence and arrest of Black Americans registering to vote. Height and Ferebee later spoke at a rally in preparation for the Freedom Day voter registration drive. According to Height, the trip was the beginning of the Council's "unique involvement in the struggle for freedom in the south."[28]

The group's experience in Selma inspired the "Wednesdays in Mississippi" program in 1964. In March 1964 leaders from the NCNW and other national organizations including the National Council of Catholic Women, the National Council of Jewish Women, United Church Women, and the National Women's Committee for Civil Rights, met for a three-day summit in Atlanta to address the horrible treatment of women and girls who were jailed for their involvement in civil rights activities. After the meeting, Height and Peggy Cowen implemented a program that would bring interracial groups of middle- and upper-class Northern women to Mississippi during the "Freedom Summer," a voter registration drive effort in Mississippi during the summer of 1964. Backed financially and organized by the NCNW, the project sought to "build understanding between black and white women in the South and black and white women in communities across the country."[29]

WOMAN'S NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CLUB

After the 19th Amendment, suffragist Emily Newell Blair asked the question in a May 1920 article, "What shall we do with it: The ballot, of course! We have it! Now what?"[30] In 1922, Blair responded by establishing the Woman's National Democratic Club (WNDC) with fellow suffragist Florence Jaffray "Daisy" Harriman to expand women's role in politics and support women working with the Democratic National Committee (DNC) (Figure 5-5). More specifically, the club was meant to encourage and prepare women for engaging in political affairs and public office as well as to serve as a clearing house for Democratic ideals. Harriman was a political organizer for President Woodrow Wilson's campaign in 1912, a Democratic committeewoman for Washington, DC (1922–1955), and later became President Franklin D. Roosevelt's envoy to Norway. Blair was a founder of the League of Women

Freedom Struggle (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 5; National Council of Negro Women, "History," accessed 8 May 2018 at http://www.ncnw.org/history/.

28 Tuuri, *Strategic Sisterhood*, 37-38, 43.

29 Tuuri, Strategic Sisterhood, 37-38, 43; Lottie Joiner, "Down in the Delta," The Crisis (March/April 2002): 32, 37; Dorothy I. Height, Speech Delivered at the First Scholarly Conference on Black Women, Washington, DC, 13 November 1979," accessed online at http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/dheight.html.

30 Emily Newell Blair, "What shall we do with it: The ballot, of course! We have it! Now what?"*The Green Book Magazine,* Vol. XXIII, 5 (May 1920): 20.

Figure 5-5. (Left)Emily Newell Blair (Right) Florence Jaffray "Daisy" Harriman (Library of Congress).

Voters and served as vice chair of the DNC in charge of women's affairs. In particular, Blair recognized that women had lost political clout since the 19th Amendment and believed that women must organize and support strong women candidates for office who would support women's equality. Blair oversaw the organization of over 2,000 clubs for Democratic women across the United States and built training programs for women party workers.[31]

The WNDC became a place where women, empowered by the vote, met, educated themselves on policy and candidates, engaged in politics, sought elected and appointed office, hosted a diversity of speakers and programs, and advocated for candidates and causes including home rule, eliminating poll taxes, and civil rights.[32] Beginning in 1926, WNDC member Minnie Fischer Cunningham, former Vice President of the League of Women Voters, established an outreach program for the WNDC, which included the "Summer Training School." The school, offered to women of partnering democratic clubs across the country, provided classes in political parties and the federal government as well as instruction on public speaking and how women could organize clubs of their own. In August 1926, the *Evening Star* reported that women who participated in the eight-week program, held at the WNDC's headquarters, were "prepared to urge a close study of State election laws with a view to improving voting conditions through simplified laws safeguarding the ballot."[33]

The WNDC also helped women prepare for political campaigns by providing classes in public speaking. In the 1930s, Jessie Haver Butler was the instructor for these classes, held at WNDC headquarters. Butler was a suffragist and one

31 Annabel Hertz, National Register Nomination Form, Woman's National Democratic Club (National Park Service 2003), 8-2.

32 Information provided by Vicky Marchard, Women's National Democratic Club Educational Foundation.

33 "Clubwomen of the Nation," *Evening Star,* 29 August 1926: 48; Annabel Hertz, National Register Nomination Form, Woman's National Democratic Club (National Park Service 2003), 8-2.

Figure 5-6. Women's National Democratic Club Headquarters at 1526 New Hampshire Avenue NW (DCPL).

Figure 5-7. President Hoover and members of the NCCW in October 1929 (Library of Congress).

of the first women lobbyists in Washington, DC, representing the Consumers League of Washington. In 1920, Cary Chapman Catt hired Butler as a lobbyist for the newly formed League of Women Voters. In addition to leading classes at the WNDC, Butler also led similar classes for other organizations in Washington, DC, in the 1930s and 1940s and after publishing *Time to Speak Up: A Speaker's Handbook for Women* in 1945, she became the public speaking consultant for the General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1950.[34]

Initially, the WNDC met at Harriman's home at 1724 I Street NW and later rented a clubhouse at 820 Connecticut Avenue NW beginning in 1924. With financial support from the DNC and a club member, the WNDC purchased the Sarah Adams Whittemore House at 1526 New Hampshire Avenue NW in 1927 as its headquarters (Figure 5-6). From this prestigious address in Dupont Circle, the WNCD continued its efforts to educate American women about political philosophy. One of its most notable members was Eleanor Roosevelt, who used the club as a launching point for her own personal reform agenda, served as honorary president, and frequented the club's headquarters between 1928 and 1959.[35] Beginning in 1924 at its Connecticut Avenue clubhouse and continuing in 1927 from its location on New Hampshire Avenue, the WNDC recruited influential Washingtonians to speak at twice-weekly club luncheons, a tradition that continues today.[36]

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC WOMEN

The United States Bishops (National Catholic Welfare Council) founded the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) in March 1920, right before the passage of the 19th Amendment (Figure 5-7). The purpose of the new organization was to give Catholic women of the United States a "common voice and an instrument for unified action in all matters affecting Catholic or national welfare." In the first 25 years of its existence, one of the NCCW's focuses was to educate and organize Catholic women so that they could exercise their

34 "Club Plans Course in Public Speaking," *Washington Post,* 23 November 1935; "Mrs. Butler Named Speaking Consultant," *Evening Star*, 25 July 1950. Mila Johansen, "A Quick Symoposis of Jessie Haver Butler's Life," accessed 5 January 2022 at https://www.milajohansen.com/about-jessie.

35 Annabel Hertz, National Register Nomination Form, Woman's National Democratic Club (National Park Service 2003), 8-2.

36 Women's National Democratic Club, "History and Archives," accessed 21 December 2021 at https://www.democraticwoman.com/history.html.

"new-found civic duties" with the right to vote. The organization's first location was at the National Catholic School of Social Service at Catholic University.[37]

BLACK SORORITIES

Black sororities, several with national headquarters or local chapters in Washington, DC, including Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA), Delta Sigma Theta (Figure 5-8), and Zeta Phi Beta (Figure 5-9), advocated for voting rights and were affiliated organizations of the NCNW. As expressed by historian Paula Giddings, "The sorority has always been an important source of leadership training for Black women, whose opportunities to exercise such skills in formal organizations are few."[38]

The Alpha chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority was founded at Miner Hall (demolished) at Howard University in 1908 and was the first Black Greek-letter sorority in the United States. The organization's five tenets were: "To cultivate and encourage high scholastic and ethical standards, to promote unity and friendship among college women, to study and help alleviate problems concerning girls and women in order to improve their social stature, to maintain a progressive interest in college life, and to be of 'Service to All Mankind.'" In 1923, the XI Omega Chapter of AKA became the first AKA graduate chapter in the District of Columbia. Norma Elizabeth Boyd, a founder of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and charter member and a president of Xi Omega chapter, established the AKA's National Non-partisan Council on Public Affairs (NPC), in 1939. The NPC, from its headquarters in Washington, DC, at 961 Florida Avenue NW, lobbied for the passage of bills that directly impacted Black Americans, particularly women, including anti-poll tax bills. In 1949, AKA invited other Greek-letter organizations to establish the American Council on Human Rights to empower racial uplift and economic development.[39]

The Delta Sigma Theta sorority and the Zeta Phi Beta sorority were founded at Howard University in 1913 and 1920, respectively. Many of the 22 women who established Delta Sigma Theta were members of Alpha Kappa Alpha and at the time wanted to create a new organization that was more involved in social activism and public service. Indeed, members of Delta Sigma Theta participated

[37] National Council of Catholic Women, "A Brief History: 1920-2020 Celebrating 100 Years," accessed online 21 December 2021 at https://www.nccw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/New-History-Brochure.pdf.

[38] Paula J. Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood: Delta Sigma Theta and the Challenge of the Black Sorority Movement* (New York: Amistad, 1988), 16

[39] DC Preservation League, "Civil Rights Tour: Employment - Non-Partisan Council," accessed 20 December 2021 at https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/1018; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, "History," accessed 20 December 2021 at https://aka1908.com/about/history; Alpha Kappa Alpha Xi Omega, "Chapter History," accessed 3 January 2022 at https://akaxo.org/chapter-history.

Figure 5-8. Members of Howard University's Delta Sigma Theta in Washington, DC, 1930 (Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution).

Figure 5-9. Members of Zeta Phi Beta in 1935 (Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution).

in the March 3, 1913, suffrage parade (see Chapter 4). Mary McLeod Bethune was a frequent speaker at Delta conventions and in the 1930s and 1940s helped shape the sorority's social action agenda. Delta Sigma Theta was an early member of the NCNW's board of directors and many Delta officers held executive positions in the NCNW.[40] At their national convention in 1944, Delta Sigma Theta also went on record and vowed to defeat the poll tax and in 1945 sent delegate Myrtle R. Phillips to the National Action Conference for the Anti-Poll Tax Bill.[41] From 1947 until 1956, Dorothy Height, who

[40] Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood,* 16

[41] " SOCIAL SWIRL: AKA Representative Arrives In City For Discussion Of

became President of the NCNW in 1957, served as president of the sorority (Figure 5-10).[42] In 1953, Delta Sigma Theta purchased its first national headquarters at 1814 M Street NW (demolished). It later moved to 1707 New Hampshire Avenue NW in 1972. Zeta Phi Beta also supported social causes important to the Black community and was founded in Howard University's Miner Hall. In 1959, Zeta Phi Beta purchased its current headquarters, located at 1734 New Hampshire Avenue NW in Dupont Circle.

Figure 5-10. Dorothy Height in 1966 (National Park Service).

All three sororities were part of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), founded on May 10, 1930, at Howard University along with fraternities Kappa Alpha Psi and Omega Psi Phi. Established as an umbrella organization for Black Greek-letter organizations, the purpose and mission of the council was "Unanimity of thought and action as far as possible in the conduct of Greek-letter collegiate fraternities and sororities, and to consider problems of mutual interest to its member organizations." In the 1960s, the NPHC became a crucial supporter of civil rights organizations including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the NAACP, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).[43]

POLL TAX REPEAL MOVEMENT

Following the ratification of the 19th Amendment, many women's organizations participated in the poll tax repeal movement, which was predominantly led by women to advocate for the abolition of poll taxes as a prerequisite for voting in Southern states. Women-led organizations, several with headquarters in Washington, DC, began fighting against the poll tax as early as 1922. Organizations leading this effort included the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax (NCAPT), and the American Association of University Women, all of which had headquarters in Washington, DC. The National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax, co-founded by Virginia Foster Durr in 1941, included many other affiliated organizations such as the Association of University Women, the American Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the League of Women Voters, the Maritime

Important National Plans," *Atlanta Daily World*, 29 September 1943; " Delta Convention Attracts National Women's Audience," *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 September 1944; " Anti-Poll Tax Adherents Visit Congressmen," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 November 1945.

42 "Delta Executive Board To Meet In Washington," *Atlanta Daily World*, 16 August 1953; Harrington, *Interpreting the Legacy of Women's Suffrage*, 18.

43 Lakeisha Harding, "National Pan-Hellenic Council," accessed online 21 December 2021 at https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/national-pan-hellenic-council-inc/.

Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the NACWC, the NCNW, and the National Negro Congress.

Women were a leading force in the poll tax repeal movement and frequently were in charge of operations under male figureheads. One example is Virginia Foster Durr (Figure 5-11), who served as vice president of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare's poll tax committee after it was established in 1938 under Representative Maury Maverick. When Maverick returned to Texas in 1939 after losing his reelection bid, Durr inherited the committee's leadership. She was later instrumental in establishing the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax, which had its headquarters at 127 B Street SE, and helped lead the organization until 1948, when the organization folded.[44]

In some instances, Black and White women worked together in the poll tax movement, although their efforts often met resistance during the 1940s, when most women's organizations remained segregated. Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune both worked with the NCAPT and promoted anti-poll tax legislation through the NACWC and NCNW. Susan B. Anthony II, grandniece of the famous suffragist and reporter for the *Washington Star* in the late 1930s, also supported the poll tax repeal effort. Anthony was a harsh critic of women's organizations that failed to "tie up the status of women with the oppressed, because of color or class."[45] National organizations, including the League of Women Voters and the Association of University Women, supported the cause, yet their help was often limited, especially in the first few decades after the 19th Amendment. Their reluctance was due to the cautious nature of the organizations and, according to author Ronnie L. Podolefsky, the "pressure to drop divisive issues in order to maintain cohesiveness within their organizations," particularly on topics tied to race. Reminiscent of the earlier women's suffrage movement, some White women's groups "attempted to sooth white supremacist fears with reassurances that removal of the poll tax would help white women and not increase the Black vote."[46]

Women's activism helped repeal the poll tax in several states, including Louisiana in 1932, Florida in 1937, Georgia in 1945, Tennessee in 1953, and Arkansas in 1964. Following World War II, funding and resources for poll

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44 Ronnie L. Podolefsky, "Illusion of Suffrage: Female Voting Rights and the Women's Poll Tax Repeal Movement after the Nineteenth Amendment," 73 *Notre Dame L. Rev.* 839 (1998):866-867.

45 Podolefsky, "Illusion of Suffrage," 868-877; Sarah Wilkerson-Freeman, "The Second Battle for Woman Suffrage: Alabama White Women, the Poll Tax, and V. O. Key's Master Narrative of Southern Politics," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 68, No. 2 (May, 2002): 354.

46 Podolefsky, "Illusion of Suffrage," 868-877.

tax repeal shifted toward civil rights-based initiatives as poll tax disenfranchisement "was uncomfortably reminiscent of policies [the United States] condemned overseas." The Supreme Court's 1944 ruling that made white primaries (primary elections held in the South in which only White voters could participate) unconstitutional furthered the move toward poll tax repeal and civil rights. In 1946, President Truman established the President's Committee on Civil Rights, which investigated the poll tax as one of its responsibilities. With the momentum of the civil rights movement, Congress passed the 24th Amendment in 1964 which prohibited poll taxes in federal elections. Regardless, several states continued poll taxes in state elections until the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1966 Supreme Court ruling on *Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections.*[47]

Figure 5-11. Virginia Foster Durr, 1948 (Public Domain).

CIVIL RIGHTS AND VOTING RIGHTS

On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which outlawed racial segregation in public accommodations including hotels, restaurants, theaters, and stores, and made employment discrimination illegal. The 1964 act briefly touched on voting and mandated that if there were literacy tests tied to voting, they had to be given to every voter regardless of sex and race, and that all people over the age of 21, regardless of education level, could vote. Civil rights organizations, especially the SNCC, turned their attention to helping Black citizens register to vote.[48] Black women, including Howard University student Robin Gregory and SNCC member Ella J. Baker, joined the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the local chapter of the SNCC on the Voter Rights Project in Mississippi.[49] The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, founded in 1964 to encourage Black political participation to challenge Mississippi's lily-white Democratic Party, had offices at 1353 U Street NW. The local chapter of the SNCC was located at 107 Rhode Island Avenue NW. Their work, along with the March 1965 unprovoked police attack on peaceful protesters in Selma, Alabama, pushed President Lyndon Johnson to send a voting act bill to Congress to remove race-based voting restrictions. When the Voting Rights Act became law in August 1965, several Black women attended the signing ceremony, including Patricia Roberts

47 Podolefsky, "Illusion of Suffrage," 884-887..

48 Evett Dionne, *Lifting As We Climb: Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box* (New York: Viking, 2020), 130.

49 "Robin Gregory: Howard University's First Afrocentric Homecoming Queen," Black Power Chronicles, accessed 7 September 2021 at https://blackpowerchronicles.org/cool_timeline/robin-gregory-howard-universitys-first-afrocentric-homecoming-queen-1966/; " Her job Is to Take Their Seats: Her Work Is Labor of Love," *Washington Post*, 26 July 1964.

Harris, professor at Howard University and ambassador to Luxembourg, and Zephyr Wright, activist and chef for President and Mrs. Johnson.[50]

[50] Martha S. Jones," Opinion: For Black women, the 19th Amendment marked not the end, but the beginning of the movement for voting rights," *Washington Post*, 25 August 2020.

Theme 6: Women and the DC Suffrage Movement (1871–1973)

OVERVIEW

After the ratification of the 19th Amendment, the front page of the Wednesday, August 18, 1920, edition of the Washington *Evening Star* announced, "Women of United States Win the Right to Vote as Tennessee Ratifies Suffrage Amendment."[1] While many women still faced obstacles at the polls and many minority women were systematically barred from voting, in Washington, DC, both men and women residents could not vote in any election. Since 1801, DC residents have fought in two primary battles: the right to self-government (home rule); and the right to full representation (i.e., voting representation in the House, Senate, and Electoral College). Support for or opposition to both did not always go hand-in-hand.[2] Women in the District of Columbia played a large role in the achievement of DC suffrage. Women established and joined organizations and local chapters of national organizations that focused on voting rights for DC residents, organized demonstrations and parades, encouraged residents to register to vote, and helped operate polling places.

After President George Washington established the new federal capital on land ceded from Virginia and Maryland in 1790, he appointed three commissioners to temporarily govern the new capital. For the next decade, residents of the new city, depending on where they lived, voted in either the Maryland or Virginia elections. With the passage of the District of Columbia Organic Act in 1801, former residents of Maryland and Virginia, now residents of the newly formed federal district, lost their right to representation in Congress (the Virginia portion of the District was returned to Virginia in 1846). In 1802, Congress passed an act that established a city council of 12 members who were to be elected annually by the free White men of the city. The act also established an office of the mayor, initially appointed by the President of United States and later elected by city residents.[3]

1 "Women of United States Win the Right to Vote as Tennessee Ratifies Suffrage Amendment," *Evening Star,* 19 August 1920:1.

2 Anne Anderson and Linda Beebe, "A Review of the D.C. League of Women Voters Project to Educate Sister Leagues Around the Country," *University of the District of Columbia Law Review* 21, no. 2 (March 2019); 20,

3 Anderson and Beebe, "A Review of the D.C. League of Women Voters Project to Educate Sister Leagues Around the Country," 19.

Figure 6-1. 1840 Map of Washington, DC by F. C. De Krafft, W. I Stone, and William M. Morrison (Library of Congress).

The lack of representation and inequality of Washington residents was not lost on members of Congress and others, as veterans of the War for Independence, who fought for democracy and "taxation without representation" were now being taxed with no representation in Congress. Congressman John Bacon of Massachusetts was one of the early supporters of DC representation and in 1803 introduced a retrocession bill that ultimately failed. One of Bacon's reasons for opposing the disenfranchisement of District residents was that they did not share the rights of other Americans.[4]

In 1871, Congress approved an act that established a territorial government for the District of Columbia, with a governor and council appointed by the President, an elected house of delegates, and an elected non-voting delegate to Congress. The territorial government lasted a little over three years. The 1871 act had also created a Board of Public Works, which implemented a massive, comprehensive plan to improve the city, headed by Alexander Robey Shepherd. The controversial and expensive plan, along with the 1873 financial panic, bankrupted the territorial government. An 1874 Congressional investigation concluded that the territorial government was too cumbersome and expensive.[5]

In 1874, Congress temporarily replaced the territorial government with a board of three commissioners appointed by the President, eliminating the

[4] Anderson and Beebe, "A Review of the D.C. League of Women Voters Project to Educate Sister Leagues Around the Country," 19.

[5] Anderson and Beebe, "A Review of the D.C. League of Women Voters Project to Educate Sister Leagues Around the Country," 28-30.

elected legislature and delegate to Congress. The 1878 Organic Act made this structure permanent and it remained in place for nearly 100 years, during which District residents were taxed without representation in Congress, could not vote in the presidential election, and had no say in their governance.[6]

The disenfranchisement of District residents in 1874 had a particularly devastating impact on Black Washingtonians. President Abraham Lincoln signed the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act on April 16, 1862, which ended slavery in Washington, DC. The act freed 3,100 individuals, reimbursed those who had legally owned them, and offered the newly freed women and men money to emigrate. Less than a year later on January 1, 1863, Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution finally outlawed slavery throughout the entire United States in December 1865. During Reconstruction (1865–1877), Black residents comprised more than 30 percent of the city's population and 2,500 of them signed an 1865 petition to Congress demanding suffrage. In 1866, Black church leaders organized a United Franchise League to coordinate a suffrage campaign. Additionally, Black business leaders established the First Ward Civil Rights Association and, foreshadowing the Free D.C. movement a century later, boycotted businesses opposed to suffrage. In 1867, Congress overrode petitions from the city's leadership and a presidential veto to grant Black (male) suffrage in Washington, three years before the passage of the 15th Amendment. On June 4, 1867, Black men came out in force to vote for the District's aldermen and councilmen.[7]

As Black Washingtonians gained power as voters, the city's White leadership and Congress became increasingly concerned about their influence on local and national affairs. Black leaders had opposed the 1871 shift in government, which had reduced the number of elected officials. Alexander Shepherd cultivated Black support by securing a few high-profile Black political appointments as well as jobs through his public works program. In exchange, Black Washingtonians supported a referendum authorizing increased funds for public projects. When the city went bankrupt, Congress, local White elites and the national White press blamed Black suffrage for Shepherd's actions.[8]

6 Anderson and Beebe, "A Review of the D.C. League of Women Voters Project to Educate Sister Leagues Around the Country," 28-30.

7 Sarah Jane Shoenfeld and Nakita Reed, National Register Multiple Property Documentation form, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C.*, 1912-1974 (December 2020), 7-8; Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove, *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 142-143, 147-148.

8 Shoenfeld and Reed, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C*, 7-8.

According to authors Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove,

> Without the ballot, black leaders struggled to hold city officials accountable or secure access to public jobs. The commissioners who ran the city - all three of whom were white men, as all commissioners would be until 1961 - routinely ignored black concerns. . . The commissioners also turned a blind eye to black poverty, which persisted at distressingly high rates.[9]

In 1878, Frederick Douglass told the *Washington Evening Star*, "I am of course in favor of suffrage as the greatest protection of my race."[10] African Americans made up about a third of the District's population until the 1940s, yet the city was governed for 100 years by a president-appointed three-member commission of White men. Congressional committees led by southern segregationists held significant power over District affairs. Unlike White residents, in particular business leaders and citizens' associations, who were able to influence both the commissioners and Congress, Black Washingtonians had little power. For Black Washingtonians, suffrage and self-governance became inextricably intertwined with their fight for civil rights.[11]

After the passage of the Organic Act, local activists worked to pass an amendment granting the District of Columbia national representation in Congress over a local elected government through home rule, i.e., getting permission from Congress to elect local officials to manage local affairs. In 1888, the first resolution for national representation was introduced in Congress. The following year marked the establishment of the Washington Board of Trade. This powerful group of local businessmen became the staunchest opponents of home rule into the 20th century. Longtime editor of the *Washington Star* Theodore W. Noyes also spearheaded an effort for national representation and argued that "the genuine American birthright is not municipal self-government but national representation." Noyes used his position to argue for national representation for over 50 years during his time as editor of the *Star*. In 1917, Noyes and the Board of Trade became formal allies in the national representation effort when they formed the Citizens' Joint Committee on National Representation for the District of Columbia. Both the committee and the Board of Trade made national representation a prerequisite to home rule. As stated by E.F. Colladay, the longtime General Counsel of the Washington Board of Trade, “We have concluded, after study over a period of many years, that local suffrage in the District cannot be effective unless the people of the District also have full representation in the Congress of the

9 Myers Asch and Musgrove, *Chocolate City*, 173.
10 "Suffrage or No Suffrage," *Washington Evening Star*, 16 February 1878.
11 Shoenfeld and Reed, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C.*, 45-46.

United States." From an economic standpoint, the Board of Trade believed that home rule would result in financial ruin—with limited taxable land, the city was dependent on federal government funds.[12] Thus, many local organizations and citizens' groups initially focused on national representation and not home rule.

Much of the opposition to home rule was rooted in racism and the fear that the city's Black residents, who made up more than a quarter of the city's residents in 1920, would dominate an elected local government. Debates over District suffrage and home rule following World War I were reminiscent of Reconstruction, when White male voters in the District overwhelmingly opposed granting Black men the right to vote. White suffrage organizations recognized that racism hindered their efforts and as a result, initially chose to focus on federal suffrage and national representation and not home rule.[13]

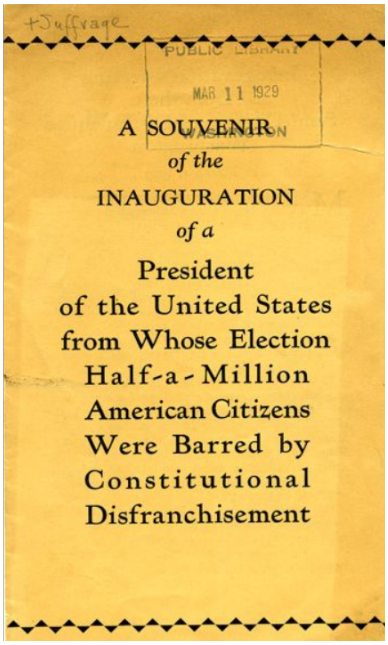

Figure 6-2. Satirical program passed out to attendees of President Herbert Hoover's 1929 inauguration (Courtesy DC Public Library, The People's Archive).

Beginning in the 1940s, established and influential organizations including the *Washington Post* and the DC League of Women Voters began supporting home rule in addition to national representation, but remained the minority through the end of World War II. In the years following the war, the balance of power began to shift from the anti-home rule business leaders to pro-home rule organizations and activists. Beginning in the 1940s, both the Republican and Democratic national platforms supported home rule. Anti-home rule Congressmen South Carolina Representative John McMillan and Virginia Senator Robert Byrd as well as the House Committee on the District of Columbia, which was dominated by racist southerners, did not want to give power to the city's Black residents. In 1949, liberal members of Congress, including Senators James Auchincloss of New Jersey and Estes Kefauver of Tennessee were successful in bringing home rule to the House floor in 1949. Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy also supported home rule. Although a total of six home rule bills were introduced to Congress

[12] Gregory M. Borchardt, "Making D.C. Democracy's Capital: Local Activism, the 'Federal State', and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Washington, D.C." (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2013), 238-239.

[13] Katharina Hering, "Voice of the Voteless: The District of Columbia League of Women Voters, 1921-1941," *Washington History* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 9-10.

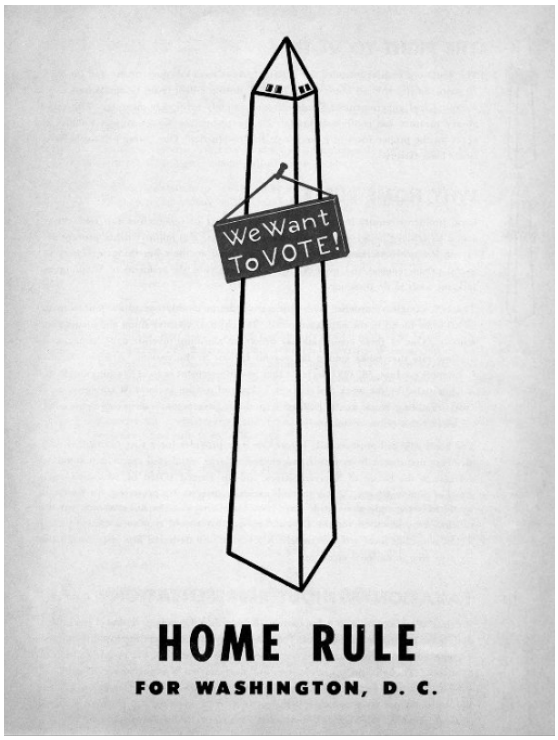

Figure 6-3. Undated poster from the home rule movement featuring the Washington Monument with a sign reading"'We want to vote!" (Courtesy DC Public Library, The People's Archive).

between 1949 and 1965, none made it out of the House and five died in the powerful House District Committee.[14]

Although initially segregated from many of the city's suffrage organizations, Black Washingtonians also persistently advocated for suffrage and national representation, as well as home rule—which became a priority. Washington, DC, became the first city in the United States with a majority of Black residents in 1957. Concurrently, the civil rights movement was gaining momentum nationwide and the fact that DC residents, in particular the Black majority, could not vote became even more apparent. Prominent activists, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Marion Barry, and Julius Hobson, encouraged and inspired citizens to voice their opposition to DC disenfranchisement and in particular advocated for home rule.[15]

In 1955, Congress passed the District of Columbia Election Code that established a board of elections, procedures for registration, nominations, and voting for officials of political parties (national committeemen and -women, delegates to presidential nominating conventions, and local party officials).[16] In 1959, Congress began considering legislation that would allow District of Columbia residents the right to vote in presidential elections. In 1960, the House Judiciary Committee proposed a resolution devoted to the rights of District of Columbia residents in presidential elections that passed in the House on June 14, 1960 and in the Senate two days later. All of the candidates in the 1960 presidential election supported the amendment. On March 29, 1961, Ohio became the necessary 38th state to ratify the 23rd Amendment. President John F. Kennedy signed the bill into law the same day. Kennedy noted:

> It is equally important that residents of the District of Columbia have the right to select the officials who govern the District. I am hopeful that the Congress, spurred by the adoption of the 23rd Amendment, will act favorably on legislative proposals to be recommended by the Administration providing the District of Columbia the right of home rule.[17]

[14] Faye P. Haskins, "The Art of D.C. Politics: Broadsides, Banners, and Bumper Stickers," *Washington History* 12, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2000-2001): 48.
[15] Haskins, "The Art of D.C. Politics," 48.
[16] DC Statehood, "Timeline - 221 Years of the District of Columbia's Efforts to Restore Self-Government," accessed 16 August 2021 at https://dcstatehoodyeswecan.org/j/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=98:timeline-dcs-quest-to-regain-its-democratic-rights&catid=46:statehood&Itemid=56.
[17] Anderson and Beebe, "A Review of the D.C. League of Women Voters Project to Educate Sister Leagues Around the Country," 30-31.

Figure 6-4. Dick Gregory (middle), comedian and civil rights activist, leads marchers to the site of the Home Rule Day rally on the National Mall in July 1966 (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

On November 3, 1964, residents of the District of Columbia were finally able to vote in a presidential election, helping to reelect President Lyndon B. Johnson.

The enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson's reelection, and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were a turning point for the home rule movement in Washington, DC. For DC residents, the Voting Rights Act did not apply—while they could vote for president, they still lacked representation in Congress and had no local elected government. After failing to persuade key House committees of the need for home rule, President Johnson eliminated the three-member Board of Commissioners in 1967 and replaced the city government with a mayor/commissioner and nine-member city council, all appointed by the president. This change paved the way for an elected city school board in 1968 and the passage of the D.C. Election Act in 1970, which provided the District with a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives. In 1973, the District of Columbia finally gained basic home rule with the enacting of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act. Still in effect today, this act allows DC residents to elect a mayor and a 13-member city council. However, all legislation passed by the mayor and city council is subject to approval by Congress, meaning D.C. is still not completely autonomous.[18]

[18] Haskins, "The Art of D.C. Politics," 48; DC Library, " D.C. Last Colony: Voting Rights and Home Rule," accessed 26 August 2021 at https://digdc.dclibrary.org/islandora/object/dcplislandora%3A117956.

WOMEN OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND THE FIGHT FOR SUFFRAGE AND HOME RULE (1900–1973)

DC SUFFRAGE AND HOME RULE EFFORTS IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY (1900–1950)

A wide range of groups and people supported national representation and later home rule in the 20th century, including Black and White civic groups and leaders, women's organizations, organized labor, social and urban reformers, as well as Democrats and Republicans. While District of Columbia residents advocated for DC suffrage in the late 19th century, momentum grew during the early 20th century, particularly after the U.S. entry in to World War I in 1917, with the recognition that soldiers from Washington, DC, were unable to vote when they returned home.[19]

Paralleling the nationwide women's suffrage movement, women of the District of Columbia advocated for their inclusion in the DC suffrage movement. In addition to joining the national movement for the right to vote, many women joined, participated in, and served as leaders in local organizations and chapters of national organizations that focused on DC suffrage.

An 1901 editorial in the *Washington Post* by Ruth G. D. Havens, a suffragist and lawyer, illustrates the desire for suffrage for District residents and the push to include women in this effort. In response to a pamphlet in support of home rule, Havens wrote:

> The "Home Rule" pamphlet says: "The ballot is the only weapon with which the people can peacefully redress their grievances." And again: "The legal residents of the District need the ballot." And again: "Let all who desire to see a government of, by, and for the people pledge themselves to aid." Quite right and patriotic. But with regard to the population. It says: "There should be about 78,000 males twenty-one years of age and over." And is this, then, what is meant by "home rule" and "legal residents" and "government by the people?" Is it all expressed in the word "males?" A thousand times no. At present the District has no suffrage and no representation. When suffrage is granted, it will not be to a color, nor a class, nor a sex. What a bluff this reiteration about governing the savages of the sea "without their consent," while native, intelligent, American women are thus governed! What a farce to use the broad sentiments of Lincoln and Jefferson and McKinley in behalf of white suffrage, or wealth suffrage, or male suffrage! Are we, then, never to expect to see a republic or democracy on this earth?[20]

The District of Columbia Equal Suffrage Association advocated for the inclusion of women in DC suffrage efforts in addition to universal suffrage for women.

[19] Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 4, 8.
[20] "Women and District Suffrage," *Washington Post*, 10 June 1901:11.

In 1908, the league adopted a resolution, forwarded to President Theodore Roosevelt, requesting that the president include women in his upcoming recommendation to Congress that residents in the District of Columbia be given the privilege of suffrage and representation. The *Evening Star* reported that one of the reasonings behind the request is that "women are required to pay taxes on nearly half of the private property owned in the District."[21]

Citizens of the District of Columbia organized the District of Columbia Suffrage League in 1912, "the first organization to crystallize the sentiment in the District for self-government and for District suffrage."[22] With its headquarters located at 809 G Street NW, the organization was composed of "men and women, citizens of the District, who believe they should have a voice in the local affairs of Washington and the District of Columbia." The league's motto was "Federal control of federal affairs: District control of District affairs."[23] Out of the league grew the Committee of Forty, "to spread the gospel of home rule." Women leaders in the DC Suffrage League included Jennie L. Munroe, a lawyer and suffrage advocate who founded the Stanton Suffrage Club of Washington, DC, and the College Suffrage Club of the Washington College of Law.[24] The following year, District of Columbia residents participated in the March 3, 1913, suffrage parade organized by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Photographs of the event showed a banner stating: "We Want the Vote in the District for Both Men and Women[25] (Figure 6-5).

Figure 6-5. District residents hold a banner in the March 1913 Women's Suffrage Parade (Courtesy DC Public Library, The People's Archive).

21 "Women Ask for Vote," *Evening Star*, 17 November 1908:20.
22 "Suffrage League Organized for District Self Government," *Washington Times*, 28 September 1914.
23 "Will 'Vote' Here Nov. 5." *Evening Star*, 30 August 1912.
24 "Suffrage League Organized for District Self Government," *Washington Times*, 28 September 1914.
25 People's Archive at DC Public Library, https://digdc.dclibrary.org/islandora/object/dcplislandora%3A117972.

On March 16, 1920, shortly before the passage of the 19th Amendment, the District of Columbia Suffrage League launched a new nationwide campaign for DC suffrage. The meeting "gave birth" to the new District of Columbia Suffrage League, "an organization for the expression of the individual demand for votes for the disfranchised citizens of the District."[26]

One of the most prominent and influential local women's suffrage organizations was the District of Columbia chapter of the League of Women Voters, also known as "The Voteless District of Columbia League of Women Voters." The DC chapter of the League of Women Voters was organized in April 1920 and officially established in May 1921. In addition to supporting the national organization's agenda, the DC League of Women Voters also advocated for voting rights for District of Columbia residents. From the beginning, the members of the local chapter emphasized that the fact that they did not have the right to vote did not interfere with their ability to work with and for the national league's objectives, which were "to foster education for citizenship and to secure improved legislation."[27] Like many of the initial leaders of the DC suffrage movement, including the Citizens' Joint Committee and the powerful Board of Trade, the Voteless League initially preferred an amendment giving DC residents voting representation in Congress. As such, the local chapter did not support home rule until the mid-1930s and focused its efforts on winning the right to vote for national representatives.[28]

Although small, with an average of 350 members in the 1920s through the 1940s, the Voteless League had a "wide reach and made a major impact." According to historian Katharina Hering, "representatives of the Voteless League lobbied Congress, testified at numerous hearings in the House and Senate, and contributed to creative ideas and energy to the popular campaigns."[29] Many of its founding members started as members of NAWSA and its affiliate, the District of Columbia Suffrage Association, and were involved in the women's suffrage movement. Their connections to the National League of Women Voters helped the local organization develop a nationwide support system for the local cause.[30]

Voteless League member and suffragist Nettie Ottenberg typified the White, middle-class women who campaigned for DC rights. Ottenberg grew up in New York City and as a suffragist, campaigned in New York state before moving to Washington, DC, with her husband in 1912. Ottenberg later urged

26 "Voters' League to Direct Drive," *Washington Post,* 8 March 1920: 9.
27 "Issue Election Call. League of Women Voters to Meet with Mrs. Pinchot." *Evening Star*, 19 May 1921.
28 Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 9-10.
29 Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 5-6.
30 Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 4-5.

Figure 6-6. DC "Voteless League of Women Voters" members Mrs. Edna L. Johnston (left), Mrs. Kate Trenholm Abrams (center), and Mrs. George A. Ricker (right) in front of the White House on November 4, 1924, with a ballot box marked "closed" (Library of Congress).

the National League of Women Voters (renamed the League of Women Voters of the United States in 1947) to support federal voting rights in the District at the 1936 national conference and was elected president of the local DC chapter in 1937. Ottenberg was also the co-founder of the Women's National Democratic Club (WNDC). Another prominent member of the Voteless League was Mary O'Toole, an Irish immigrant and lawyer who also served as president of the DC chapter of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. O'Toole was also involved in the Women's City Club and the Citizens' Joint Committee. Both Ottenberg and O'Toole testified at congressional hearings on behalf of DC suffrage and the Voteless League for DC suffrage.[31]

In 1926, the DC chapter officially changed its name to "The Voteless" League of Women Voters, a name it started calling itself in 1924 to emphasize the "deplorable condition" faced by residents of the District of Columbia. The Voteless League later described its initial focus: "In August 1920, all women in the United States were enfranchised - except the District of Columbia. The District's League's demand 'for a voice and a vote' started immediately with a campaign to get DC suffrage to give the District representation to Congress and the Electoral College."[32]

[31] Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 6.
[32] Anderson and Beebe, "A Review of the D.C. League of Women Voters Project to Educate Sister Leagues Around the Country," 48.

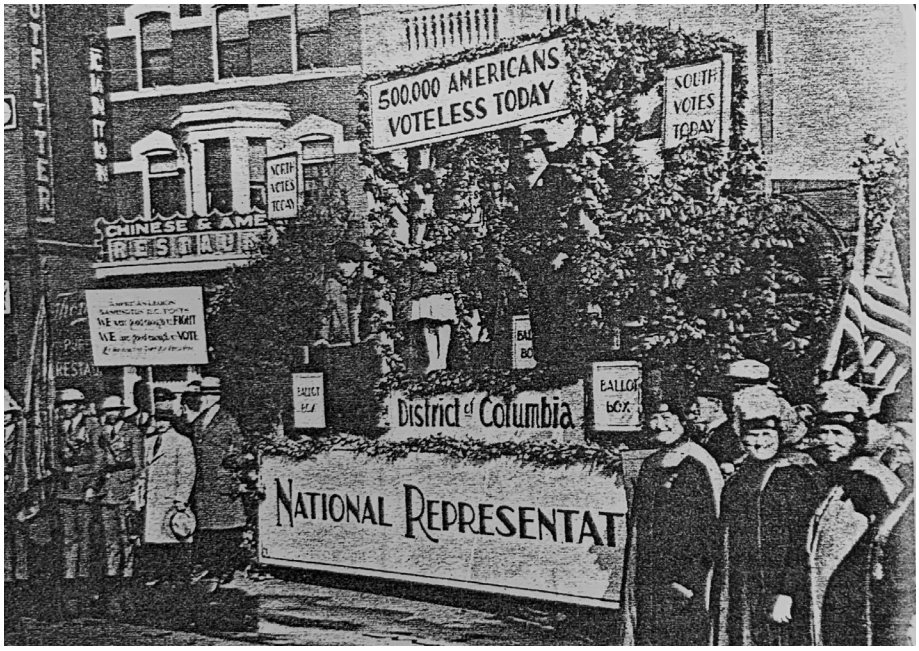

Figure 6-7. "Humiliation Day" parade float, 1928 (Evening Star, 6 November 1928, Courtesy DC Public Library, The People's Archive).

The Voteless League planned creative protests on Election Day, Independence Day, and the anniversary of the Boston Tea Party to bring attention to the movement and to remind Americans that there was still "taxation without representation" in the United States. On Election Day in November 1924, the Voteless League called it "humiliation day" and members displayed sealed ballot boxes in several location, including in front of the White House, that read, "All citizens of the United States are voting today except citizens of the District of Columbia. Ballot boxes closed." During the 1920s and 1930s, the display of ballot boxes on election days became a Washington ritual.[33] The Voteless League and other DC suffrage organizations also labeled Election Day Washington's "Day of Humiliation." On November 6, 1928, the Joint Committee on National Representation for the District organized a parade around the White House and the city to remind the nation of the disenfranchisement of DC's citizens. The centerpiece of the parade was a decorated float that was nearly 20 feet tall and held a banner reading "500,000 American Voteless Today" and a closed ballot box (Figure 6-7). As part of the event, the committee arranged for airplanes to drop balloons with the slogan, "Give Washington National Representation." The Voteless League was a critical part of the event and stood guard over locked ballot boxes at some of the city's principal corners including in front of the White House.[34]

[33] "Padlocked Ballot Boxes Drive Home Voteless Status of D.C.," *Evening Star*, 4 November 1924; "Ballot Boxes Closed Here," *Evening Star*, 8 November 1932; "Humiliation Day Protest is Voiced by Voteless D.C.," *Evening Star*, 6 November 1928; Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 4-5.

[34] "Citizens' Demonstrations Mark District's 'Day of Humiliation,'" *Evening Star*, 6 November 1928.

Another women's club supporting DC suffrage in the early decades of the 20th century was the Women's City Club, established in 1919 by Mary O'Toole, Alida Henriques, and Alice Heaven, among others. The organization purchased 22 Jackson Place NW as its headquarters and by 1920 had 3,253 members. Initially led by O'Toole, the club supported and advocated for suffrage in the District of Columbia.[35] Other local women's organizations that supported suffrage and representation for the District of Columbia included the District of Columbia Equal Suffrage Association, the Susan B. Anthony League, the Twentieth Century Club, the National Women's Trade Union League, and the Federation of Women's Clubs, an umbrella organization that represented 30 women's clubs and 10,000 women by 1921.[36]

For Black women and men, suffrage in the District of Columbia meant being able to have a voice in local and federal affairs at a time when they faced intense discrimination. Black Washingtonians' frustrations over residential segregation that forced Black residents to pay higher rents and excluded them from buying houses in certain neighborhoods, the lack of employment opportunities for Black women beyond domestic service, and the stinginess of relief agencies toward poor Black women, among others, "underscored the need for racial integration, civil rights legislation, black voting rights, and local control over governance." During the 1930s, Black women's campaigns for integration and voting rights in Washington, DC, intersected with their struggles to secure physical safety and economic justice for Black residents. Aware of their unique position in DC, "activists recognized that ending discrimination in the nation's capital was a critical first step in securing freedom and justice for black Americans living across the nation."[37]

In the 1930s, Black Washingtonians, especially women, shifted their focus from absentee voting and directed their activism toward voting rights in the nation's capital. These activists used established networks in labor, politics, and social reform to engage citizens at the grassroots level. They also formed new organizations to press for local voting rights. In 1932, Black residents of the District formed the Progressive Democratic Club. The organization's mission was explicitly tied to voting rights and sought to influence the "management of our government to alleviate human

35 "Women's City Club Outlines Drive for District Suffrage," *Washington Post*, 31 August 1924; "District Suffrage Action by Women," *Washington Post*, 5 December 1920; Women's City Club, *Women's City Club, Washington, D.C.: Twentieth Anniversary, 1919-1939* (Washington, D.C.: Women's City Club, 1939).

36 Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 4-5; Hearings Before the Committee on the Judiciary House of Representatives: National Representation and Suffrage for the Residents of the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938).

37 Mary-Elizabeth B. Murphy, J*im Crow Capital: Women and Black Freedom Struggles in Washington, D.C., 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 2018), 143.

suffering and to contend for the right of the franchise in the District of Columbia." Although the organization was short-lived, Black residents continued to advocate for DC voting rights throughout the decade.[38]

DC residents also had the support of the local Black newspapers, which strongly endorsed voting rights in articles and editorials. An October 1936 editorial in the *Washington Tribune* asked readers to participate in a "voteless poll" to understand if Black residents were in favor of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal program or Republican candidate Governor Alf Landon of Kansas. Over 5,700 Black residents participated in the poll, and demonstrated their desire to participate in acts of citizenship of which they were disenfranchised.[39]

Figure 6-8. Portrait of Norma Boyd (Public Domain).

In 1938, Black women activists of the Xi Omega local chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA) at Howard University formed the Non-Partisan Lobby for Economic and Democratic Rights, later known as the National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs (NPC), the first organization devoted to lobbying the federal government to advance African American civil rights. Although the council lobbied for African Americans nationwide, its local chapter was an important voice in the fight for enfranchisement, voting rights, and civil rights in Washington, DC. Norma Boyd, a teacher and founding member, served as the Non-Partisan Council's first lobbyist[40] (Figure 6-8). Other women who were a part of the council and local chapter of the AKA were Dorothy Boulding Ferebee and Marjorie Hollman.[41]

Black residents also joined White residents in the Citizens' Joint Conference on National Representation for the District of Columbia to advocate for District suffrage. Mary Mason Jones, president of the Local 27 Teachers Union, was elected to the executive council of the Citizen's Conference. Under her role in the teacher's union and her regular contact with parents, students, and teachers, Jones was an essential organizers for voting rights in the city. Physician Iona Whipper, an activist with the Tuesday Evening Club, arranged for the

38 Murphy, *Jim Crow Capital*, 150-151.
39 Murphy, *Jim Crow Capital*, 152.
40 Boyd taught at several different public schools from 1912 until 1948. These schools are Wilson High School, Bell Multicultural High School, Military Road School, Garnet-Patterson Middle School, and Banneker High School; Mary Ellen Perry, "Norma Boyd Remembers Sorority's Start in 1908," *Washington Post*, 12 January 1978:30.
41 "Voteless D.C. Citizens Jubilant in Plebiscite," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 14 May 1938. Murphy, *Jim Crow Capital*, 147; "Civil Rights Tour: Employment-Non Partisan Council," https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/1018.

organization to be part of the Citizens' Joint Conference as was AKA's Xi Omega's Non-Partisan Lobby for Economic and Democratic Rights.[42]

While many White organizations focused on federal suffrage and national representation, organizations began to consider home rule as part of their platforms in the late 1930s. Much of the initial opposition to home rule was rooted in racism and that home rule would give Black residents unwanted dominance in an elected local government. The Voteless League reassessed its opposition to home rule in the 1930s following major issues with the city government and a reduction of funding provided by Congress, which made it difficult for the local government to provide basic services. The Voteless League, as part of its mission, educated the public about the political process, studied legislation and the decision-making process, and suggested reforms. Driven by its commitment to social welfare programs and effective government, the Voteless League began explicitly advocating for local self government by the end of the 1930s. Virginia Ross Weston, the chair of the Voteless League's Department of Government and Operation, wrote in 1937 "We used to say 'federal suffrage' or 'national representation' when we talked about votes for the District of Columbia. We now talk in broader terms and say 'Suffrage for the District of Columbia.' Briefly, this means that we now support both federal suffrage (or national representation) and local suffrage." The National League of Women Voters supported this development and endorsed the principle of full suffrage for the District of Columbia at its 1938 convention.[43]

Initially, the historically segregated Voteless League down played the racial concerns related to home rule. During its first two decades of existence, the Voteless League did not have any Black members, which was typical of the League of Women Voter's local chapters. As the Voteless League began to integrate its membership in the late 1930s and 1940s, it became "one of the stalwart advocates for home rule, civil rights, and civil liberties in the city." As explained by Hering, "By the late 1930s, other white or integrated civic groups began embracing home rule. The League's increasing support for home rule thus reflected the evolution of the D.C. democracy movement as a whole."[44]

The Citizens' Conference on District Suffrage, consisting of 271 local organizations, organized the "Referendum on National Representation and Local Suffrage" in the spring of 1938 which asked District residents two questions: 1) Do you want the right to vote for officials of your own city government in the

[42] Murphy, *Jim Crow Capital*,156-157.
[43] Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 10-11.
[44] Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 7, 12.

Figure 6-9. Members of the DC Voteless League drape a ballot box in black on Election Day, November 8, 1938 (Library of Congress).

District of Columbia, and 2) Do you want the right to vote for President of the United States and for member of Congress from the District of Columbia. The District Suffrage League set up voting places in 38 public schools as part of the effort. On April 30, 1938, the referendum, or plebescite, attracted 95,538 participants. An overwhelming majority, 82,977 (87 percent), voted in favor of question one, for local suffrage/home rule. A majority, 87,092 (91 percent), also voted in favor of question two for national suffrage.[45]

In the 1938 plebiscite, 23,000 of the 95,000 District residents who participated in the suffrage referendum were Black. As stated by author Mary-Elizabeth B. Murphy in *Jim Crow Capital: Women and Black Freedom Struggles in Washington, DC 1920-1945*, "Voting rights found their strongest champions among black Washingtonians, who comprised 24 percent of the voting population: more than 99 percent of black Washingtonians endorsed local suffrage" or home rule.[46] The Baltimore *Afro-American* reported on the effort: "Voteless residents of the District thronged to the polls Saturday and voted, strangely enough, for the right to vote." The newspaper interviewed Black residents who voted in the plebiscite, including several women. Myra Austen, a teacher at Shaw Junior High School said, "This is just a referendum, but it should help residents of our city toward the point where they can have a say in the government." Another resident, H. Helen Moore, stated, "As long as local residents are paying heavy taxes, I don't see why we can't vote." Since the referendum asked for race and not sex, it is unknown how many Black women participated in the plebiscite. However, newspaper articles indicate that many Black women voted and suggests that they were quite prominent and among some of the first to vote, such as Mrs. Georgia Stanley, who was the first voter at Browne Junior High School in Northeast Washington, and Mrs. Marie Brent at Garnett-Patterson Junior High School in Northwest.[47]

45 Hering, "Voice of the Voteless," 4.
46 Murphy, *Jim Crow Capital*, 140.
47 "Voteless D.C. Citizens Jubilant in Plebiscite," Baltimore Afro-American, 14 May 1938.; "Scenes As District Citizens Went to the Polls for Suffage," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 14 May 1938.

Not long after the 1938 plebescite, the House Judiciary Committee convened a hearing on voting rights in the District. Over the course of three days, Black and White residents testified in support and opposition of District suffrage. Among the women who testified were Nettie Ottenberg of the Voteless League; Anna Kelton Wiley, vice chair of the Citizens' Joint Committee on National Representation; and Anna E. Hendley, representing the Society of Natives. The only Black woman to testify was Cora L. Wilkinson, a 59-year-old activist representing the Friday Evening Club. Wilkinson was prominent in social reform efforts in the city through her association with the Friday Evening Club, the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, and the Red Cross. Wilkinson testified that she worked with "a great many of women who represent the citizens of the District of Columbia" and that they "do want a voice in the government." While only Wilkinson testified, other Black women showed their support by signing the resolution from the Citizens' Joint Conference on National Representation, including Ionia Whipper, Mary D. Dodson, and Mary Mason Jones. After the Congressional hearing, Black citizens formed the D.C. Voters League to continue the fight for District suffrage. Women who joined included Ionia Whipper, Blanche Curry, Gabrielle Pelham, and Dorothy Boulding Ferebee.[48]

Once again, wartime increased the advocacy for District suffrage. In 1940, the League of Women Voters expanded its activism for DC suffrage nationwide and created a broadside entitled, "Washington: Our National Home Town," which was circulated nationally and distributed locally in conjunction with a five-day educational campaign for newcomers to the District.[49] At their national convention in Washington in May 1942, the National League of Women Voters received unanimous support for DC suffrage. President of the Voteless League Edna Callaghan emphasized that suffrage in the District was a nationwide issue: "wartime Washington emphasizes the needs for suffrage and participation in Government and had made the obtaining of suffrage more than ever a national problem."[50]

Congresswoman Mary T. Norton of New Jersey believed that women were the backbone of the DC suffrage effort and stated in 1944, "If a militant army of District women decided that they were tired of being stepchildren of the Federal Government; if they joined forces and demanded recognition of their rights as free Americans; if they were supported by women of the States,

48 U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, "National Representation and Suffrage for the Residents of the District of Columbia, Hearings Before the Committee on the Judiciary," 75th Congress, 3rd Session (Washington, DC: Government Printing Press 1938); Murphy, *Jim Crow Capital*, 160-162...

49 "Senators Back Women Voters' Here," *Washington Star*, 25 September 1942.

50 "Fight for D.C. Suffrage Wins Full Support of Women Voters," *Washington Star,* 1 May 1942.

the bills before Congress to give them part of these rights would be debated and passed."[51] More local and national women's organizations joined the DC suffrage effort in the 1940s, including the Women's Bar Association, the Washington Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, and the American Association of University Women.[52] At a House Subcommittee meeting in February 1945, several national women's organizations testified on behalf of DC suffrage. The National League of Women Voters, led by president Anna Lord Strauss, was one of the national organizations that backed District suffrage. Nettie Ottenberg, who at the time served as chair of the Committee on National Representation of the Women's Joint Congressional Committee, noted that six other national women's organizations supported District suffrage and wanted to testify at the hearing. In addition to the National League of Women Voters, these were the American Federation of Teachers, the National Women's Trade Union League, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Service Star Legion, the American Medical Women's Association, and the Women's National Homeopathic Medical Society.[53]

DC SUFFRAGE AND HOME RULE (1946–1973)

In 1946, residents of the District formed yet another organization to press for DC suffrage. The new Central Suffrage Conference included members of the League of Women Voters and the District Federation of Women's Clubs.[54] The organization also included Black members, including Beatrice Reed of the NAACP.[55] Local organizations held another plebiscite on DC suffrage and home rule in November 1946. Similar to 1938, the two questions asked of District residents were: 1) Do you want the right to vote for officials of your own city government in the District of Columbia, and 2) Do you want the right to vote for President of the United States and for members of Congress from the District of Columbia.[56] Women's organizations across the city urged public support and participation in the plebescite, with the promise to turn out a "tremendous feminine vote on November 5." New supporters joining the effort were the National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution and the Business and Professional Women's Club of the District.[57]

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51 "Mrs. Norton Declares Women Could Bring Suffrage for District," *Washington Star*, 18 July 1944.
52 "Citizens' Petition and Arguments on National Representation," *Washington Star,* 7 May 1941.
53 "National Groups to Aid Backers of DC Vote," *Washington Star*, 12 February 1945.
54 "New Organization Formed to Seek Vote Here," *Washington Post,* 3 January 1946.
55 "Three Negroes Named as Suffrage Trustees," *Pittsburg Courier,* 13 april 1946.
56 "Suffrage Plebiscite Workers to Get Final Instructions Friday," *Washington Star* 29 October 1946.
57 "DAR Support Added As Women Rally to Suffrage Plebiscite," *Washington Star,* 16 October 1946.

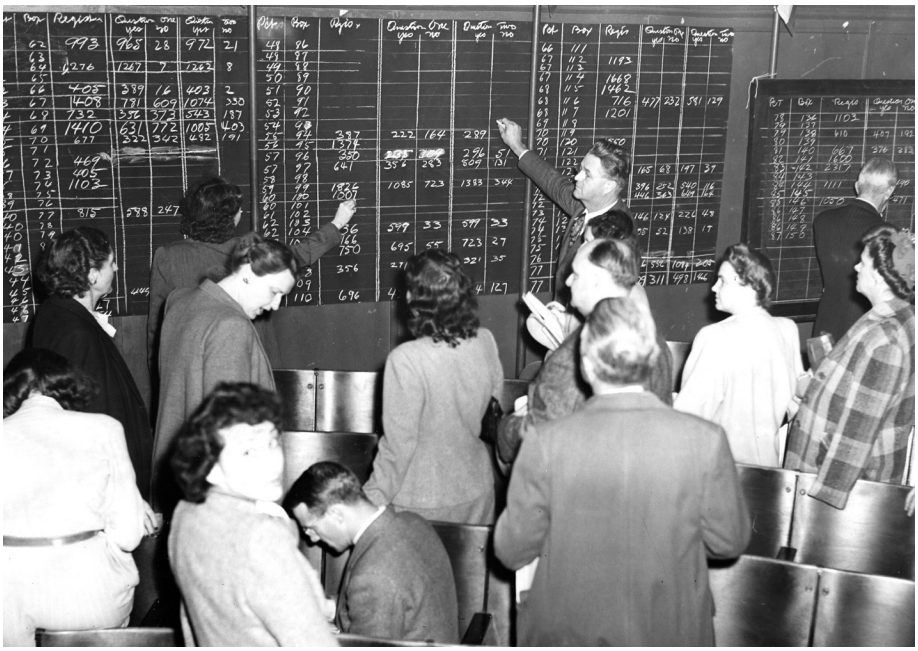

Figure 6-10. Volunteers, including members of the Voteless League, help tally votes from the 1946 plebescite (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

Once again, women played a large role in the success of the plebiscite by answering phones at the plebescite information center, sending letters to civic leaders, and serving at polling places (Figure 6-10). According to the US Census, the District had approximately 475,000 potential voters in 1940. Over 167,000 residents (35% of potential voters) voted on question one in 1946 and of those, over 117,000 voted in support of a local elected government. For question two, nearly 167,000 residents voted and of those, just over 140,000 voted that they wanted the right to vote in federal elections. Once again, the residents of the District had spoken and with over 169,000 residents registering to participate in comparison to 95,000 (20% of potential voters) in 1938, the interest in and support for DC suffrage and home rule continued to grow. Local suffrage leaders anticipated that the 1946 plebescite would have more influence on Congress than the 1938 referendum not only because of the larger turnout, but also because Congress was not hampered by wartime legislation.[58] Black residents protested the designation of sex and race on the plebescite ballot and after a vote, organizers agreed to only ask name, address, and age.[59] Since ballots were tracked by address, the *Atlanta Daily World* later reported that three polling places located in predominately Black neighborhoods (one in Cardozo and two in Deanwood) voted unanimously for suffrage in the District.[60]

58 Jesse C. Suter, "Civic Problems, Civic Bodies," *Evening Star*, 10 November 1946; "Plebiscite Vote Spurs Drive for Congress Action," *Washington Star,* 6 November 1946. .

59 "Plebiscite Will Ask Only Name, Address, Age," *Washington Daily News*, 1 November 1946; "Plan Jim Crow Balloting for DC Plebiscite," *Chicago Defender,* 2 November 1946.

60 "DC Precincts Vote for Suffrage," *Atlanta Daily World*, 12 November 1946.

While much of the efforts of the previous decades focused on federal suffrage and national representation, more organizations, including integrated organizations and those run by Black citizens, came to the forefront to support home rule in the late 1940s and 1950s. A 1948 Washington Post poll indicated that seven out of ten residents in the District wanted home rule.[61] In 1948, several women testified before the joint congressional subcommittee in support of the Auchincloss Home-Rule Bill, including Bernice M. Lee, representing the Young Democrats of the District, Frances Lichtenberg of the League of Women Shoppers, and Mary Gregory, president of the District Federation of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.[62] In March 1949, the Voteless League finally stood up against the racism that hindered support of home rule with the statement, "No one group can rule this city if we all exercise our franchise for the common good. . . There is no reason to assume that [Black residents], more than any other group, vote in a bloc. . . How can we participate in the United Nations effort to grant rights to minorities everywhere when we refuse to grant rights to our own citizens?[63]

Figure 6-11. Portrait of Norma Theresa-bel Virginia Harper Danley in 1928 (UCLA Library).

In 1949, Theresa-bel Virginia Harper Danley of the Voteless League urged women to join the effort in supporting home rule (Figure 6-11). Danley, who was Black, joined the Voteless League in the 1930s and was a member of the Upper 16th Street Unit of the organization.[64] Since women outnumbered men in the District at the time, Danley believed that women should take the lead in this effort until every American citizen, including those in the nation's capital, had the right to vote. Danley urged women, particularly Black women, to join the League of Voters. The *Atlanta Daily News* reported that although the league had an integrated policy, Danley "was somewhat disturbed over the fact that Negro women were coming into the league so slowly." The league extended invitations to various women's groups and. Danley hoped that more Black women would join the organization. Following the direction of the national organization and other local chapters across the country, Washington's Voteless League had several small focus groups that met at intervals to discuss current issues as well as ways of getting legislation through Congress.[65]

61 "7 in 10 Here Want District Home Rule," *Washington Post,* 1 February 1948.
62 "'Little Guys' Unanimous For Rule Bill," *Washington Post*, 8 February 1948.
63 "League of Women Voters Gives Answers on Home Rule," *District of Columbia Citizen*, March 1949.
64 "In Memoria," The DC Voter League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia Vol. 74, No. 1, September 1998, accessed at http://www.dcwatch.com/lwvdc/lwv9809.htm.
65 "Voters Group Urges D.C. Home Rule in Next Congress," *Atlanta Daily World*, 27 December 1949.

Figure 6-12. "Miss Voteless District of Columbia," Anne Chodoff, in front of the White House in November 1952. The District League of Women Voters organized the event on the eve of Election Day (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

In 1950, the Voteless League made DC home rule the chief item on its program. Additionally, as a means to expand its membership, continue constructive action, and promote "an integrated community life," the league committed to include integration as part of its agenda. Specifically, the league stated that it would "1) review effects of segregation on District government services, 2) investigate actions taken by other communities in this field; and 3) formulate a plan appropriate for league action."[66] The Voteless League also continued grassroots and visible activism to support both suffrage and home rule. In 1952, the league protested the District's voteless status with a motorcade around the city, asking that the residents of the District be permitted to participate in the 1956 presidential election. According to the *Washington Post*, a sound truck led the procession and it included a horse-drawn wagon carrying "Miss Voteless District of Columbia," league member Anne Chodoff (Figure 6-12). The procession stopped at Stevenson and Eisenhower headquarters and took photographs in front of the White House.[67] The Voteless League held this event again in 1954 when a "hardy band of home rule advocates braved frigid temperatures to march down Pennsylvania Avenue. in a torch light parade." Also participating was the Home Rule Committee, who had a 30-foot float carrying Mrs. Voteless DC and a replica of the Washington Monument.[68]

66 "Home Rule 1st on Agenda of Voters' League," *Washington Post,* 17 May 1950:B5.
67 "Women Voters League Holds Parade Against Votelessness," *Washington Post*, 4 November 1952.
68 "Torchlight Paraders Ask for DC Vote," *Washington Post*, 4 November 1954.

Other local organizations supported home rule and women in particular played a large role in local activism. A 1951 article in the *Washington Post* highlighted the involvement of women in the home rule effort with the headline "Women Spearhead Drive for D.C. Home Rule." The newspaper reported that many of the local women, who were not letting "heat, humidity nor the summer slump keep them from the cause of self-government," were mostly housewives "whose husbands are 'too busy to do much about home rule.'"[69] Many of the women worked as part of the Home Rule Committee, a group of men and women volunteers with offices at 308 Pennsylvania Avenue SE and later 1717 Connecticut Avenue NW. Support of the home rule bill, which called for a 15-member elected council and a nonvoting delegate in the US House of Representatives, constituted long hours "pacing the halls of the Senate Office building, calling on Senators to ask for support" and educating those who were unfamiliar with the bill. In addition to funds, the work called for time and effort, "which many of the men folks say they can't spare. . . The children off to school or parked with a sitter, these women go down to work, trying to convince everyone they can. . . that change is needed in District government."[70]

Figure 6-13. Portrait of Anna Kelton Wiley in 1913 (Public Domain).

In May 1954, the Home Rule Committee hosted a Home Rule Ball, held in the Presidential Room of the Statler Hotel. Co-chairs of the event were members of the board of directors Mrs. Montgomery Blair and Mrs. J. Borden "Daisy" Harriman.[71] In 1955, Harriman, co-chairman of the Home Rule Committee and 84 years old, was "waging a red hot, no-holds campaign" for DC suffrage and home rule and advocated for residents to refuse to pay DC taxes. Harriman stated, "We've got to do something spectacular that will wake people up to the fact that Washington is voteless. . . I'd be perfectly willing to go to prison."[72]

In 1955, after Congress passed a DC election law that established a board of elections and allowed residents to vote for officials of political parties, residents of the District registered to vote for the first time in 82 years. On December 7, 1955, the first day of voter registration, over 300 residents registered. Among the new registrants was Anna Kelton Wiley, one of the founders of the National Woman's Party. Wiley, who at the time was 78 years old, spent five days in the District Jail in 1917 for picketing the White House (Figure 6-13). Wiley was Voter Registrant No. 9, the first citizen-at-large to register after eight District and party officials

69 "Home Rule Ball Patrons Listed," *Washington Post*, 16 March 1954; Capitalites Dance for Home Rule," *Washington Post*, 5 May 1954.
70 "Women Spearhead Drive for D.C. Home Rule," *Washington Post*, 12 August 1951: S1.
71 "Home Rule Ball Patrons Listed," *Washington Post*, 16 March 1954; Capitalites Dance for Home Rule," *Washington Post*, 5 May 1954.
72 "Woman Demands Vote for D.C. Residents," Waterloo Iowa, *The Courier*, 10 May 1955.

registered. Wiley told the *Washington Post* that she "longed to vote ever since [the passage of the 19th Amendment]. . . What we have to do now is get support behind a bill to give us a direct vote for the President and Vice President." The newspaper reported, "There is still the stuff of the militant suffragist in Mrs. Wiley." The League of Women Voters sent a delegation to register and set up a speakers' service to explain the primary elections to neighborhood groups.[73]

In May 1956, District voters were able to vote for political party delegates for the first time. The Democratic Party announced that it would send three women delegates from the District of Columbia to the Democratic Convention in Chicago "to fight for strong civil rights and Home Rule plans in their party platform." The women delegates were Pauline "Polly" Shackleton, editor of the American Institute of Architect's newsletter, member of the Washington Home Rule Committee, National Committeewoman of the D.C. Democratic Central Committee and later one of the original members of the Council of the District of Columbia in 1974; Dr. Margaret Just Butcher, an associate professor of English at Howard University and civil rights activist; and Gladys Duncan, teacher, civic activist, and wife of famed baritone Todd Duncan. In 1955, Duncan became the first Black member of the Woman's National Democratic Club.[74]

Figure 6-14. Congressmen William Widnall and Peter Frelinghuysen, both of New Jersey, and Carol Sharpe and Chloeann Beck. The two women were picketing near the Capitol in a demonstration sponsored by the Washington Home Rule Committee in February 1959 (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

After Congress passed the 23rd Amendment in June 1960, which extended the right to vote in presidential elections to eligible DC residents, local organizations, including the League of Women Voters and the Citizens' Joint Committee on National Representation, began a national campaign to get the amendment ratified. Also aiding in the effort was the Citizens Committee for the Presidential Vote, formed in 1960 and primarily financed through a trust left by *Washington Star* editor Theodore Noyes. The National League of Women Voters announced that the adoption of the amendment would be "one of the prime efforts of 1961." While strategy was decided by individual state chapters, the DC chapter worked closely with the national league.[75]

73 "DC Voters Register First Time in 82 Years," *Washington Post*, 8 December 1955.

74 "D.C. Women Delegates: Support Home Rule and Civil Rights," *Washington Post*, 6 August 1956; Adam Bernstein, "Gladys Duncan, 108 Dies," *Washington Post*, 15 March 2005.

75 Morton A. Mintz, Suffrage Campaign Is Pushed: District Groups Urge Amendment Action by States," *Washington Post,* 12 October 1960.

Organizations, particularly after the ratification of the 23rd Amendment in June 1960, also focused on voter registration and enthusiasm for the 1964 Presidential election. In January 1964, DC's Democratic Central Committee, led by Polly Shackleton, sponsored a breakfast, attended by 150 to 200 persons who then walked over to the District Building to register (Figure 6-15). Participants held signs encouraging residents to vote.[76] In September 1964, not long before the deadline to register, Nettie Ottenberg and members of the DC League of Women Voters rode in a horse-drawn carriage past the White House and Capitol to draw attention to the campaign to register District voters (Figure 6-16). After more than 50 years as a suffragist, Ottenberg, founder and past president of the "Voteless League" was finally able to vote.[77] On November 3, 1964, almost 200,000 District residents voted for President of the United States for the first time in 164 years.

With the 23rd Amendment ratified, local and national organizations began to focus on DC representation in Congress and home rule: in a 1964 ballot initiative, a 9 to 1 majority of D.C. residents voted in favor of home rule. Although the Home Rule Committee, the League of Women Voters, and other organizations took the lead on home rule activism in the 1950s, by the 1960s these organizations took a back seat to more militant organizations who used the tactics of, or were tied to, civil rights organizations.[78] Howard University's Nonviolent Action Group, an offshoot of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and led by Stokely Carmichael, advocated for home rule and inspired many young activists, including Robin Gregory and Mary Lovelace, to join the fight for home rule.[79]

The enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson's reelection, and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 helped propel the home rule movement. The movement received an additional boost and became more intertwined with the civil rights movement in August 1965, when Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to DC for two days of rallies in support of the home rule bill. The *Washington Post* reported that King tailored his remarks to Washington's problems and called the absence of home rule "'basic' to the city's ills and threatened the possibility of 'massive demonstrations' if Congress [did] not pass the home rule bill." King also met with President Lyndon Johnson,

76 "Early Vote Registration in Brisk," *Evening Star*, 2 January 1964.
77 "Veteran Suffragist to Vote First Time," *Evening Star*, 17 September 1964.
78 Haskins, The Art of D.C. Politics," 52.
79 "Robin Gregory: Howard University's First Afrocentric Homecoming Queen," Black Power Chronicles, accessed 7 September 2021 at https://blackpowerchronicles.org/cool_timeline/robin-gregory-howard-universitys-first-afrocentric-homecoming-queen-1966/

Figure 6-15. Polly Shackelton (third from left) and members of the Democratic Central Committee down 14th Street NW toward the District Building to register to vote., 1964 (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post.).

Figure 6-16. Charlotte Price, Nettie Ottenberg, and Jane Hammer of the League of Women Voters ride in a carriage during a voter registration drive, 1964 (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

members of Congress, and the District Commissioners, and concluded his visit with a rally attended by some 5,000 people at Metropolitan Baptist Church.[80]

In the months following King's visit, top local organizations behind home rule including labor, religious, political, and civil rights groups were "mounting a

[80] "King Begins Tour Here On Call for Home Rule," *Washington Post,* 5 August 1965; Shoenfeld and Reed, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C.*, 1912-1974, 47; Borchardt, "Making DC Democracy's Capital," 249.

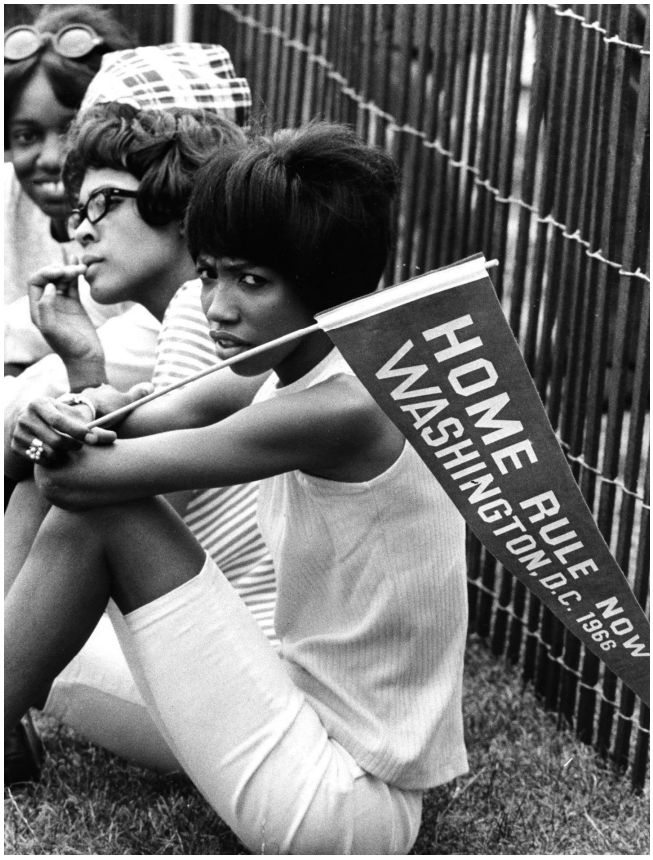

Figure 6-17. Three young women sit on the grass during the Home Rule Day rally on the National Mall in July 1966 (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

massive new campaign on Capitol Hill and across the country to urge" the passage of the home rule bill. The key groups were the Washington Home Rule Committee, the Greater Washington Central Labor Council (part of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations or AFL–CIO), the Democratic Central Committee, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Coalition of Conscience, and the DC League of Women Voters.[81] The previous spring, the women of the Democratic Central Committee sponsored a "Dollars for Home Rule" drive to collect funds for the effort and set up collection tables on strategic street corners and went house-to-house to collect donations.[82]

In 1966, head of the DC chapter of the SNCC Marion Barry announced the creation of "Free D.C.," a coalition of civil rights groups working for home rule in the District of Columbia. Barry's organization was initially backed by the DC Coalition of Conscience, a group of leading District clergymen, and the Washington Chapter of the NAACP. Eventually both organizations distanced themselves from Barry and the movement due to what they considered strong-arm tactics.[83] Building on Barry's momentum, the Washington Young Republican and Young Democratic clubs joined with youths from the Americans for Democratic Action and the NAACP to form Youth Organizations United (YOU) for home rule. The new organization announced that it would sponsor joint meetings and a rally on July 17, 1966, at the Washington Monument grounds to boost interest in the home rule cause (Figure 6-17). Although Marion Barry, leader of the Free D.C. Movement, did not support the group and thought another organization would "only confuse people in the community," members of YOU wanted to "maintain close liaison with the Free D.C. Movement and work with them." YOU's goal was to involve residents in a broad-based movement for home rule. One of the 32 speakers at the event was National Democratic Committeewoman Polly Shackelton.[84] Although the Free D.C. Movement dwindled by the end of 1966, Barry had effectively

81 "Home Rule Proponents Mounting Massive Drive," 12 *Washington Post*, November 1965.
82 "Home Rule Drive Means Coffee Time," *Washington Post*, 31 May 1965.
83 Shoenfeld and Reed, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C.*, 1912-1974, 12; Haskins, The Art of D.C. Politics," 55.
84 "4 Local Group Form a Hole Rule Coalition," *Washington Post*, 7 June 1966; "Home Rule Rally Set For Sunday," *Washington Post*, 14 July 1966; "Home Rule Rally This Afternoon at Monument," *Evening Star*, 17 July 1966.

framed the fight for home rule as a civil rights issue and invigorated Black advocacy for the city's self-governance. President Johnson's reorganization of the DC government in 1967 was in part because of the actions of Free D.C.[85]

While the Voteless League and other local organizations shifted their support toward home rule, not all followed. The Federation of Women's Clubs supported national representation, yet did not always hold the same support for home rule. In the 1940s, the organization endorsed national representation for District residents but remained opposed to home rule unless it was accompanied by national representation in Congress.[86] As late as 1965, even after the passage of the 23rd Amendment, the organization continued to oppose home rule and passed a resolution favoring the current Board of Commissioners government in the District of Columbia. The organization felt that the current government had functioned adequately for the last 87 years and did not need to change. President of the DC chapter of the organization Mary J. Bean stated at the time, "The District of Columbia belongs to the whole nation. . . When anyone comes to Washington to live, they know our form of government and if they do not like it, they should not have come. Most people who work for the Federal Government retain their legal residence in the state from which they were appointed and we doubt very much that they would change this if we had home rule.[87]

In 1970, the year of its 50th anniversary, the National League of Women Voters launched a nationwide program, called "The Year of the Voter," to obtain 1.5 million signatures on a petition calling for Congressional representation in the District of Columbia. The League distributed bumper stickers that stated in bold letters, "D.C. - Last Colony," which according to one member was "an appropriate description of the state of the District until its citizens are given the full voting rights, local as well as national, that are their birthright as Americans."[88] The League presented the petition to Congress on May 6, 1970, during the League's national convention in Washington. To further this effort, the League planned several events including a "Taxation Without Representation" parade of all interested organizations and individuals, held on April 12. The parade began at 13th and K Streets NW and proceeded to the District Building, where participants placed "their income tax returns and letters to Congressmen in mailbags to protest D.C.'s colonial

85 Shoenfeld and Reed, *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C.*, 1912-1974, 12; Haskins, The Art of D.C. Politics," 55.
86 "Wender Begins Testimony for Home Rule," *Washington Post,* 22 December 1944.
87 Statement of Miss Mary J. Bean, President of the District of Columbia Federation of Women's Clubs Presenting General Federation of Women's Clubs' Resolution Against Home Rule in the District of Columbia," 1965, MS 350, DC Federation of Women's Clubs Records, Folder 36, Kiplinger Library.
88 "D.C. - Last Colony," *Washington Post,* 7 February 1970:A14.

Figure 6-18. The League of Women Voters, including DC League president Connie Fortune (center) at the April 12, 1970, march for DC suffrage (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

Figure 6-19. Two young girls participate in the League of Women Voters parade in April 1970. (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

status" (Figure 6-18 and Figure 6-19). At the event, DC Mayor Walter Washington and Council Chairman Gilbert Hahn proclaimed the week "Petition Week." Additionally, the League sponsored a free music festival on the Washington Monument grounds the following Saturday.[89] Finally, in

[89] "D.C. Petition Drive," 1970, League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia ephemera, E 1670, DC History Center; "Parade," *Washington Post*, 12 April 1970:H7; "Women Voters to Lobby for DC Rights in House," *Washington Post*, 10 April 1970:B2.

September 1970, Congress approved a bill giving the District a nonvoting delegate in the House. The following year, District residents elected Walter Fauntroy as their delegate to Congress in a special election.

As Congress argued over home rule, 29-year-old District resident Susan E. O. Breakefield sued the District government for the return of her DC taxes on the basis that taxation without representation was unconstitutional. Although she lost her three-year battle in February 1971 when the Supreme Court refused to hear her case, it brought attention to the fact that DC residents were taxed without full representation.[90]

Another organization that pushed for home rule in the early 1970s was "Self-Determination for D.C," led by District delegate Walter E. Fauntroy and Senator Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts. The coalition launched a national campaign for home rule legislation and a constitutional amendment to provide elected representation in Congress for District citizens. Other national and local organizations supporting the coalition were the AFL–CIO, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Common Cause, National Council of Churches, D.C. Bar Association, Leadership Conference for Civil Rights, American Federation of Government Employees, and the Greater Washington Board of Trade. The coalition testified before Congress in support of an elected mayor/council government.[91]

In August 1972, Washingtonians and voting organizers hoped that heavy voter registration and participation in the District of Columbia elections could bolster support of home rule - opponents of home rule pointed to light voter turnout in previous elections as evidence that District residents did not care about governing themselves. Operation Black Vote and the DC Board of Elections attempted to register up to 237,000 new voters in the District. Of the 262,925 registered voters, 20,000 were new voters between the ages of 18 and 21 (see Theme 7). Lynn Washington, one of the 12 organizers for Operation Black Vote, consisting primarily of Howard University Students, planned to deputize more than 800 registrars and 100 volunteers to work on registering new voters. The project was funded by Howard University, the Youth Citizen Fund and Student Vote.[92] Others supported efforts to oust from office Democratic Congressman John L. McMillan from South Carolina, who was chairman of the House District Committee and for years refused to refused to let the issue of home rule come

90 "Congress' Right to Tax District Upheld," *Evening Star*, 19 July 1969,"Susan Sues Government," *Washington Star*, 21 June 1970; "High Court Refuses D.C. Taxpayer's Suit," *Washington Post* 23 February 1971.
91 Haskins, The Art of D.C. Politics," 55.
92 "Old Building's Fate Mulled," *Washington Post*, 10 August 1972.

Figure 6-20. Students demonstrate their support for home rule at a rally in front of the District Building. 1973 (Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

up for a vote. Wilhelmina Rolark and her husband Calvin Rolark worked with congressional delegate Walter E. Fauntroy on a voter registration drive, pushing the number of registered Black voters in McMillan's district from 3 percent of the electorate to 29 percent. Mrs. Rolark helped mobilize DC residents to contact relatives and friends in South Carolina to vote against McMillan.[93]

In January 1973, Congressman Charles Diggs (D-MI) replaced McMillan as chair of the House District Committee. In 1973, Diggs, one of 16 Black congressmen, coordinated the passage of the D.C. Self-Government and Governmental Reorganization Act (Home Rule Act). The League of Women Voters and other organizations held a "sidewalk" rally parade in early May 1974 to support the home rule charter referendum. In May 1974, District residents celebrated voters' approval of the home rule charter, which permitted the election of a mayor and city council.[94]

[93] Rolark graduated from Howard University in 1936 and received a master's degree in political science from Howard in 1938. While waiting tables and working for the Postal Service, she went to law school at night and earned a degree from the Terrell Law School in 1944. As a lawyer, Rolark worked on civil rights and other cases in Washington through the 1950s, and founded the National Association of Black Women Attorneys. She later served as a four-term D.C. Council member for Ward 8. Patricia Sullivan, " D.C. Council Member, Home Rule Soldier Wilhelmina J. Rolark," *Washington Post*, 15 February 2006.

[94] "March, Rally Set Today to Back Home Rule Vote," *Washington Post*, 20 April 1974; "Celebrating Home Rule," *Washington Post*, 10 May 1974.

Theme 7: Women and the Youth Suffrage Movement (1940–1971)

OVERVIEW

On March 23, 1971, Congress passed the 26th Amendment, lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. The required 38 states ratified the amendment by July 1. From passage to ratification, the amendment became a law in 100 days, the fastest amendment to be ratified of any of the 27 amendments to the Constitution. The 26th Amendment stated: “The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of age.” After a decades-long effort that began in earnest in the 1940s, ten million new voters were now enfranchised.[1]

Historically, English common law held that "full maturity and discretion" occurred when an individual turned 21 years of age, and many claim that this was tied to British customs around the required age for knighthood and serving the crown. Consequently, 21 served as the voting age for men in Great Britain and this tradition continued in Colonial America. As early as 1819, states began to debate lowering the voting age to 18. The motivation was likely connected to the return of soldiers from the War of 1812 and the age of men eligible for government service.[2]

Although men the age of 20 or older were legally eligible for conscription during the Civil War, many teens fought on both sides of the war, once again prompting discussions to lower the voting age. No proposals gained traction at the time. When the women's suffrage movement began in the late 19th century, voting age was not a part of its platform.[3]

It was not until World War II, when more young men were conscripted into military service, that the call for lowering the voting age became more pronounced. In 1940 and 1942, Congress passed successive Selective Service laws that lowered the military draft age from 21 to 20 and then 20 to

1 Manisha Claire, "How young Activists Got 18-Year-Olds the Right to Vote in Record Time," *Smithsonian Magazine*, 11 November 2020, accessed at https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-young-activists-got-18-year-olds-right-vote-record-time-180976261/

2 Mae C. Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment: Constitutional Connections, Activist Intersections, and the First Wave Youth Suffrage Movement," *Seattle University Law Review*, Vol. 43: 1237 (2020): 1238-1241-1242.

3 Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment," 1238-1239.

18, respectively. Lowering the voting age to 18 sparked debate in Congress regarding its connection to the age of military service and the fairness of conscripting men who could not vote into service. Although state and federal legislators introduced multiple bills calling for a lower voting age and despite increasing public awareness and endorsement of the issue by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, none of the bills passed at the federal level.[4]

While the mantra "young enough to fight, young enough to vote" was prevalent and persuasive during the 1940s and 1950s, scholars disagree on whether efforts to lower the voting age during the early years of youth suffrage were driven by a small group of federal legislators or by young people. As expressed by Mae C. Quinn, professor of law and director of the Youth Justice Clinic at the University of the District of Columbia, "To be sure, the road to ratification of the 26th Amendment involved many twists and turns between the 1940s and 1970s, with the nation's long-standing commitment to racial discrimination as constant context."[5]

Young people did become involved in youth suffrage in the 1940s and 1950s with the United States Student Assembly, comprising college students across the country, which passed a 1943 resolution urging a reduced national voting age. Both the College Federation of Young Republicans and the Young Democratic Club of America worked in the 1950s to reduce the voting age to 18. Additionally, education groups, including the National Education Association, American Association of School Administrators, as well as military groups like the Veterans of Foreign Wars aligned themselves with youth suffrage. The push for youth suffrage gained momentum and between 1942 and 1944 31 states proposed lowering the voting age. Only one succeeded and in 1943 Georgia lowered its voting age to 18 for state elections.[6]

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower at the State of the Union Address urged "Congress to propose to the states a constitutional amendment permitting citizens to vote when they reach the age of 18."[7] By 1960, Kentucky (1955), Alaska (1959) and Hawaii (1959) granted voting rights to those 18 or older in state and local elections. These changes only occurred at the state level and did so at a time when Black Americans continued to face discrimination at the polls and when only those 21 years of age and older could vote in federal elections.[8] In 1963, President Kennedy's Commission of Registration and Voting

4 Claire, "How young Activists Got 18-Year-Olds the Right to Vote in Record Time.".
5 Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment," 1243-1244.
6 Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment," 1245-1246.
7 Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment," 1245-1246.
8 Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment," 1243-1244.

Participation (Voting Commission) released its findings on the reasons many citizens fail to register and vote and its recommendations for increasing citizen voter participation. One of the committee's recommendations was reducing the voting age to 18 for all persons across the country, regardless of race or sex.[9]

The "old enough to fight, old enough to vote" mantra reemerged in Congress and in pop culture in the 1960s as the US government sent more troops to war in Vietnam. Concurrently, teenagers' growing involvement in political movements such as the push for civil rights, campus free speech, and women's liberation showcased the power of youth in directing the United States' cultural conversations. Author and history professor Rebecca de Schweintz explains that politicians "who were supporting a lower voting age in the 1940s and 1950s talked about the potential for young people to be politically engaged. In the late 1960s, they didn't talk about political potential, because [youth] everywhere" were engaged.[10] Quinn writes, "Ultimately young people, including Black teenage girls, played a significant role in lowering the nation's voting age. They accomplished this task through direct advocacy, indirect influence on national thinking via activism, and by working in collaboration with adults, including President [John F.] Kennedy, and other likely and unlikely allies."[11]

By 1968, two of every three Americans agreed that "persons 18, 19, and 20 years old should be permitted to vote."[12] The youth suffrage movement unified the efforts of a diverse group of organizations including the NAACP, Young Democrats, and Young Republicans. In addition to new organizations, such as the Youth Citizen Fund, Citizens for Vote 18, and Let Us Vote (LUV), the movement also gained the support of established unions and lobbying groups, including the United Auto Workers and the National Education Association. The National Education Association specifically established Project 18 and the Youth Franchise Coalition (YFC), specialized advocacy groups, to support the campaign.[13] In 1969, no less than 60 resolutions to lower the voting age to 18 were introduced in Congress, but none resulted in action.

9 Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment," 1254.
10 Claire, "How young Activists Got 18-Year-Olds the Right to Vote in Record Time.".
11 Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment," 1246.
12 Linda Lyons, "Gallup Brain: History of the Youth Vote," *Gallup*, 20 January 2004, accessed at https://news.gallup.com/poll/10348/gallup-brain-history-youth-vote.aspx.
13 The YFC included the support of numerous advocacy groups including Americans for Democratic Action; Baltimore Youth Franchise Coalition; Democratic Party Citizens Division; Citizens for Vote 18; College Young Democratic Clubs; Episcopal Church; Let Us Vote (LUV); National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Education Association; National Student Caucus YMCA; Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Southern Committee on Political Ethics; Student World Federalists; numerous state Teacher's Associations; American Jewish Committee; Council on International Relations and UN Affairs; National Association of Colored Women's Clubs; National Association of Social Workers; National YMCA; and the United Auto Worker's. Ben O'Meara, "Children and the Most Essential Right," accessed 8 August 2021 at http://www.youthrights.org/articles/mostessentialright.pdf;

The youth vote appealed to both the Democrat and Republican parties. For Democrats, it offered the party a chance to expand its voting base. For Republicans, it would incorporate youth participation into the current system while maintaining the status quo and preventing more radical unrest.[14] Richard Nixon's campaign for the 1972 presidential election wanted to send a message that Nixon could reach the younger generation by lowering the voting age.[15]

The Senate Judiciary Committee met on the issue in 1970, with numerous supporters testifying at the hearing. In his testimony, James Brown Jr. of the NAACP connected the voting rights of Black Americans and those of young people, saying: "The NAACP has a long and glorious history of seeking to redress grievances of the blacks, the poor, the downtrodden, and the 'victims' of unfair and illegal actions and deeds. The disenfranchisement of approximately 10 million young Americans deserves, warrants and demands the attention of the NAACP."

Philomena Queen, the youth chair of the Middle Atlantic Region of the NAACP, also spoke in front of the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments in 1970 and stated:

> We see in our society wrongs which we want to make right; we see imperfections that we want to make perfect; we dream of things that should be done but are not; we dream of things that have never been done, and we wonder why not. And most of all, we view all of these as conditions that we want to change, but cannot. You have disarmed us of the most constructive and potent weapon of a democratic system—the vote.[16]

After the testimonies, Congress amended the 1970 extension of the Voting Rights Act to lower the voting age to 18. Although President Nixon signed the bill into law, he issued a public statement that he believed Congress had no power to enact then lower age requirement without a constitutional amendment. With the 1970 case *Oregon v. Mitchell*, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a verdict that 18- to 20-year-olds would be eligible in federal elections, not in state or local elections. Consequently, support grew for a constitutional amendment that would set the national voting at 18 in all elections.[17]

Claire, "How young Activists Got 18-Year-Olds the Right to Vote in Record Time."

14 Claire, "How young Activists Got 18-Year-Olds the Right to Vote in Record Time."

15 Claire, "How young Activists Got 18-Year-Olds the Right to Vote in Record Time."

16 Claire, "How young Activists Got 18-Year-Olds the Right to Vote in Record Time."

17 "The 26th Amendment," History.com, accessed 8 August 2021 at https://www.history.com/topics/united-states-constitution/the-26th-amendment

Figure 7-1. President Richard Nixon signing the 26th Amendment on July 5, 1971. In the background are 18-year-old students from "Young Americans in Concert" (Richard Nixon Presidential Library).

On March 10, 1971, the Senate voted unanimously to pass the proposed amendment. The House followed on March 23 and the 26th Amendment went to the states for ratification. In only two months, the required 38 states had ratified the amendment. On July 5, 1971, President Nixon signed it into law (Figure 7-1). Speaking at a White House ceremony attended by 500 newly eligible voters, Nixon stated, “The reason I believe that your generation, the 11 million new voters, will do so much for America at home is that you will infuse into this nation some idealism, some courage, some stamina, some high moral purpose, that this country always needs.”[18]

In September 1971, the DC Board of Elections held a voter registration campaign with the goal of adding several thousand new 18- to 21-year-old voters in the District of Columbia to vote in the November 1971 school board elections.[19] DC, along with 16 states, also allowed students who attended college in the District to register to vote. By October, around 1,000 18-to 21-year-olds had registered to vote in the District.[20] By the following August, 1972, the number had increased to approximately 20,000.[21]

18 "The 26th Amendment," History.com, accessed 8 August 2021 at https://www.history.com/topics/united-states-constitution/the-26th-amendment

19 "Drive to Register Young Voters Set," *Washington Post*, 21 September 1971.

20 "2,000 Registered for School Voting," *Evening Star*, 4 October 1971; "!6 States Let Youths Vote at Colleges," *Washington Post*, 6 September 1971.

21 "Old Building's Fate Mulled," *Washington Post,*10 August 1972.

WOMEN AND YOUTH SUFFRAGE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The fact that youth, along with all residents of the District, did not have the right to vote came to the attention of members of the DC suffrage movement in 1940 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress passed the Selective Training and Service Act, which required all men between the ages of 21 and 45 to register for the draft. As reported in the *Washington Times Herald* in July 1940, residents "Can Die But Not Vote."[22] In 1961, on the heels of the 23rd Amendment, which gave DC residents the right to vote in Presidential elections, President John F. Kennedy recommended giving 18-year-olds in the District the right to vote. Although the recommendation attracted immediate support in the Senate, it ultimately got bogged down by controversy in the House.[23]

The majority of efforts in the District of Columbia associated with the youth suffrage movement took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s and were primarily connected to organizations' headquarters, lobbying efforts and testimony to Congress, and specific events held in the District. In April 1969, the NAACP Youth and College Division sponsored a National Youth Mobilization conference in Washington, DC. More than 2,500 youth lobbied with their senators and congressmen for the passage of the Vote 18 legislation.[24] The conference was organized by Carolyn Quilloin, a rising leader in the NAACP after her participation as a teen in lunch counter sit-ins in her hometown of Savannah, Georgia. Quilloin became the NAACP's National Coordinator for Youth Mobilization in 1969 and headed the program from the NAACP's New York office (Figure 7-2). The event was a "coming out event" for the youth suffrage movement.[25] Nearly 40 different entities accepted invitations to the event, including the National Student Young Women's Christian Association, the League of Women Voters, and the Youth Franchise Coalition.[26]

The NAACP invited several young White men leaders from the National Education Association's Youth Franchise Coalition (YFC) to participate in the April 1969 event. Launched in 1968 and located at 1525 M Street NW, the organization came out of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (now the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights), which was then composed of around 80 organizations, including the NAACP, National

22 "Why District Demands Vote," *Washington Times Herald*, 26 July 1940.
23 "Bible Backs, Celler Hits Voting at 18 in District," *Washington Star*, 1 May 1961.
24 "Resolutions Adopted by the Sixty-Second Annual Convention of the NAACP at Minneapolis, Minn,., July 5-9, 1971," *The Crisis* (March 1972): 7.
25 Claire, "How Young Activists Got 18-Year Olds the Right to Vote in Record Time."; Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment," 1261.
26 "Key Congressmen to Talk During Youth DC Meet," *Chicago Daily Defender*, 19 April 1969.

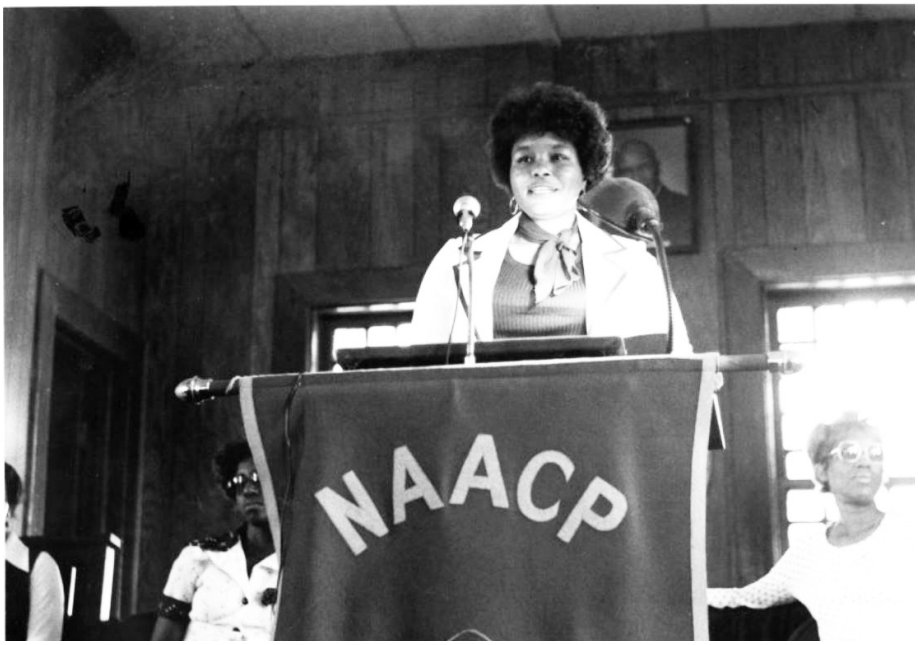

Figure 7-2. Carolyn Quilloin Coleman speaking at a NAACP meeting, May 1975 (Courtesy of City of Savannah Municipal Archives).

Education Association, Council of Churches, League of Women Voters, Young Republicans and Young Democrats, who were all working on the Voting Rights Act. In April of 1969, the Youth Franchise Coalition had recently deployed "Project 18," its organizing strategy to bring together youth and lower the voting age. Although the YFC had found support in a small group of legislators, the organization's funding and nearly all-White male staff were struggling to reach diverse audiences across the country. Consequently, the NAACP's Youth Mobilization Conference was a powerful platform for the YFC and Project 18.[27]

Although White male youth often dominate the story of the youth suffrage movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, women also played a large role in the passage of the 26th Amendment. Rosalyn Hester (now Rosalyn Hester Baker) was the chair of the YFC and later became a Government Relations Specialist with the NEA in Washington, DC, both of which impacted the 26th Amendment.[28] Pat Keefer, a Cincinnati, Ohio, native, served as National Organizer for the YFC and went on to join Common Cause as a lobbyist in the early 1970s, focusing on the passage and ratification of the 26th Amendment and later the Equal Rights Amendment.

After the ratification of the 26th Amendment in 1971, organizations shifted their focus to youth voter registration. One of these organizations was the

[27] "How Ian MacGowan '61 Lobbied for Change," Whitman College, 6 July 2021, accessed at https://www.whitman.edu/newsroom/lobbying-for-change; Quinn, "Black Women and Girls and the Twenty-Six Amendment," 1262-1263.

[28] Brian Hudgins, " Political science graduate puts her skills to the test as Hawaii legislator," Texas State University, 1 July 2021, accessed at https://news.txstate.edu/alumni-impact/2021/rosalyn-hester-baker.html.

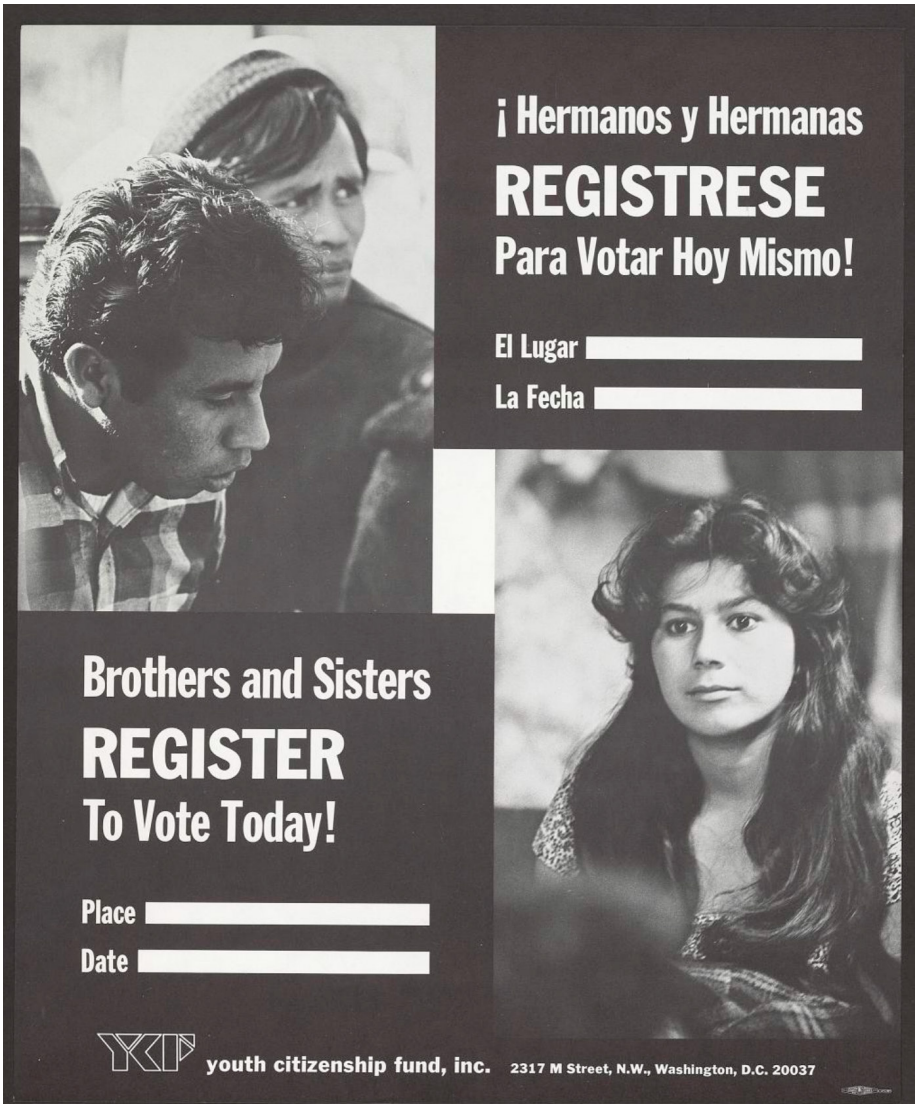

Figure 7-3. Youth Citizenship Fund poster, 1971 (Smithsonian National Museum of American History).

Youth Citizenship Fund Inc. (YCF), located at 2100 M Street NW and later 2317 M Street NW, a nonpartisan, nonprofit foundation that worked to ensure the "wide participation of youth in the electoral process." The purpose of the organization was to "promote, encourage and obtain full participation in the electoral process for citizens between the ages of 18 and 25 through education, registration and election law research."[29] On June 25, 1972, the Youth Citizenship Fund organized a week-long intensive voter registration program in Washington, DC, for 50 high school seniors from across the country. The 1972 press release for the program noted that the teenagers would work in the YCF's national and regional voter registration offices and would receive training from "well-known, experienced, civil rights workers from the South and by voter registration experts from various parts of America, including Northern city ghettoes and California and Texas chicano

[29] Letter to Honorable Gerald R. Ford from Carroll Ladt, 19 July 1971, accessed 21 July 2021 at https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0054/12237643.pdf.

communities." The program featured speakers from many of the organizations leading the youth voting effort, including the Voter Education Project, the National Urban League, and the National Movement for the Student Vote.[30]

The nonpartisan organization Common Cause, established in Washington, DC, in 1970, also played a role in lobbying for the passage of the 26th Amendment. Leading the effort for Common Cause were Ian MacGowan and Pat Keefer; both previously worked for the Youth Franchise Coalition and served as co-directors of the Eighteen-Year-Old-Vote project for Common Cause. After the passage of the amendment, Common Cause focused its efforts on ratification and centralized all of its state outreach from its Washington, DC, office, located at 2100 M Street NW in 1971 and 2030 M Street NW by 1973.[31] Other organizations that helped register new voters included Operation Black Vote, consisting primarily of Howard University Students, and Youth Pride Inc., a self-help organization financed primarily by the Department of Labor and located at 1536 U Street NW.[32]

[30] "Press Release Statement, Citizenship Fund," Lowcountry Digital Library, Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston, 1972.
[31] Anne Frazier Yowell, Ratification of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment (master's thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1973), 39, 42.
[32] "'Roving Registrars' Revived in District," *Washington Post*, 2 August 1972; "Register Vote, Program Urges," *Washington Post*, 25 August 1972.

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Conclusion

Many of the topics covered in this Historic Context Study remain relevant as citizens of the United States continue to advocate and fight for voting rights. The year 2020 marked the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, bringing renewed attention to the role of suffragists across the country. The celebration of the 19th Amendment created an opportunity to expand the parameters of suffrage beyond the traditional 1848 to 1920 timeline to include voting rights and enfranchisement post-1920 and to reframe the narrative to one that is more inclusive. It also allowed some organizations, such as the National Woman's Party and the League of Women Voters, to confront their past and recognize the role of racism in the suffrage movement.[1]

Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment 50 years ago on March 22, 1972, yet it still has not been ratified. Almost 100 years after Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party introduced the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, the fight for its ratification continues. Supporters of the ERA continue to see its relevance in ending discrimination in the workplace, helping women achieve equal pay, requiring states to intervene in cases of domestic violence and sexual harassment, and bolstering protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people. Although opponents argue that the ERA is unnecessary because the 14th Amendment guarantees everyone the “equal protection of the law,” supporters of the ERA recognize that there are still gaps in existing laws at both the federal and state levels and that the ERA would address these comprehensively. On February 13, 2020, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a joint resolution to remove the original time limit assigned to the Equal Rights Amendment. The support of the Senate is still needed.[2]

Despite the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act almost 60 years ago, the issue of voting rights remains critical today. The 2020 federal election resulted in the highest voter turnout in more than a century. The election also brought tremendous change in voting habits, largely driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in millions of Americans voting early in person (26 percent) and by mail (43 percent). Responding to claims of voter fraud after the 2016 and 2020 elections, politicians across the country continue to restrict voting by adding obstacles to voter registration, issuing cutbacks on early voting, and enacting strict voter identification requirements. Many

1 Harrington, *The Legacy of Women's Suffrage,* 7-12.
2 Why the Equal Rights Amendment is Back,” *New York Times,* 15 January 2020.

of these voter suppression efforts disproportionately affect people of color and echo the country's long history of racial discrimination at the polls.[3]

Closer to home, Washingtonians persist in their fight for full representation, an effort sustained for over 220 years. After winning local self-government and securing a non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives in the 1960s and 1970s, District residents continue to demand full voting representation in Congress. Residents worked with a broad national coalition to pass a DC Voting Rights Amendment in 1978 (which expired without ratification in 1985) and a statehood bill in 2019.[4] The House first passed the statehood bill, the Washington, DC, Admission Act (H.R. 51), in June 2020, the first time a DC statehood bill passed in either chamber of Congress. The then-Republican-majority Senate did not vote on the bill and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton reintroduced the statehood bill in January 2021. The House passed the bill in April 2021. Senator Thomas Carper of Delaware introduced the companion bill on January 26, 2021, but at the time of this writing the bill has not yet passed. As expressed by Washington, DC, Mayor Muriel Bowser, "With no constitutional underpinning, the disenfranchisement of Washingtonians is the most glaring civil rights and voting rights issue of our time."[5]

As in the women's suffrage movement and beyond, Washington, DC, continues to be the center of voting rights activism. The relevancy of these topics today only strengthens the need to recognize significant sites in Washington, DC, that tell the story of women's suffrage, particularly from the perspective of underrepresented women. As Page Harrington writes in *The Legacy of Women's Suffrage*, "With an entire century to reflect back on, the time has come to give the venerated stories we once believed to be inscrutable a fresh look through a twenty-first-century lens."[6]

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3 Nick Corasaniti, "Voting Rights and the Battle Over Elections: What to Know," *New York Times*, 29 December 2021.

4 George Derek Musgrove and Chris Myers Asch, "Democracy Deferred: Race, Politics, and D.C.'s Two-Century Struggle for Full Voting Rights," Statehood Research DC, March 2021, accessed online at https://assets.website-files.com/5df7f915fcb12b538aa0494f/60541fb1af8047a0fde84ad7_Democracy%20Deferred.March.2021.pdf.

5 Government of the District of Columbia, Executive Office of the Mayor, " Mayor Bowser Calls On U.S. Senate to Rectify the Most Glaring Civil Rights and Voting Rights Issue of Our Time by Supporting DC Statehood," 22 June 2021, accessed online at https://mayor.dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-calls-us-senate-rectify-most-glaring-civil-rights-and-voting-rights-issue-our.

6 Harrington, *The Legacy of Women's Suffrage*, 11.

DC Women's Suffrage Movement Property Types

Properties associated with women's suffrage in Washington, DC, represent a wide range of property types and include individual buildings, such as houses that were the residences of notable people or headquarters of suffrage organizations; sites, such as public parks and streets that were the location of important suffrage-related events; and districts comprising multiple buildings in close proximity to one another and sharing historical and cultural associations.

Below are descriptions of property types identified as part of this historic context and subtypes relevant under each property type. Similar to other historic contexts and property types, such as those associated with the Civil Rights Movement, these property type designations are related to the properties' associations to the suffrage movement in Washington, DC, rather than their original building type, their period of construction, or their design. Some properties may be classified under more than one property type or subtype.

PROPERTY TYPES

STRATEGY CENTERS

Strategy Centers are properties that were sites of meetings or that housed organizations or people that had a significant role in developing advocacy for advancing women's suffrage nationally and/or in the District of Columbia. Organizational headquarters and meeting places are the most common subtypes in this category. This property type may be associated with all themes, particularly Theme 3: Women's Suffrage Organizations in Washington, DC; Theme 5: After the 19th Amendment - Women, Voting Rights, and Political Activism in the District of Columbia (1920–1965); Theme 6: Women and the DC Suffrage Movement (1871–1973), and Theme 7: Women and the Youth Suffrage Movement (1940–1971).

DEMONSTRATION CENTERS

Demonstration Centers are properties that were the location of parades, protests, rallies, and/or speeches that had a significant role in advancing women's suffrage nationally and in the District of Columbia. Sites where notable events or demonstrations were held, such as Lafayette Square and Pennsylvania Avenue, are the most common subtype in this category. This property subtype type is associated with all themes.

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PROPERTIES ASSOCIATED WITH KEY PEOPLE

Properties Associated with Key Persons are those properties that best represent the activities of individuals, or that are most closely associated with individuals who were active in advancing women's suffrage and/or voting rights. Key people most typically identified with advancing women's suffrage, equal rights, and voting rights may be organizers, heads and leaders of local and national organizations, attorneys, and community leaders. Buildings including residences and organizational headquarters are the most likely subtype associated with this property type. However, other subtypes associated with key people may also be relevant. This property type is associated with all themes.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Historic Districts are areas where there is a significant concentration of properties that share historical associations with the women's suffrage movement in Washington, DC, between 1848 and 1973. While the National Park Service defines such a district as comprising properties that are "united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development," the key unifying element is that the properties share a relationship to people, institutions, or events significant to women's suffrage; they may not necessarily share similar physical or architectural characteristics or may not have been built during the same period. In addition to individual properties, the presence of public spaces in which women's suffrage activities took place may help define an area's association with this historic context. Historic Districts may include multiple property subtypes related to women's suffrage, including organizational headquarters, residences, meeting places, sites, etc. and could be associated with multiple themes.

PROPERTY SUBTYPES

ORGANIZATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Organizational Headquarters housed advocacy groups or other organizations with a primary focus on advancing women's suffrage and/or suffrage and home rule in Washington, DC. Many of these organizations may have frequently relocated and were not associated with any single building for a substantial period of time. Others may have occupied offices in large buildings, particularly those associated with national organizations. In some instances, the organizations operated from board members' homes and used public buildings for larger meetings (see Meeting Places). Dual-use buildings include

the headquarters of the National Association of Colored Women, which also served as the home of Mary McLeod Bethune when she was in Washington, DC.

MEETING PLACES

Buildings such as churches, offices, hotels, schools, and other public buildings such as libraries commonly served as formal or informal meeting places for suffrage organizations. Churches historically served as sites of community organizing or meetings and were most likely used by Black Washingtonians since churches were among the few social gathering sites available outside of school buildings designated as "colored" until the latter half of the 20th century. In the same vein, other building types with large meeting spaces, such as schools, libraries, and hotels, were often the sites of large suffrage meetings. In particular, suffrage organizations often held annual conferences in Washington, DC, hotels.

RESIDENCES

Residences are the homes of people known to have been active in advancing women's suffrage and/or voting rights for a sustained period of time, or are the properties most associated with those individuals. Dwellings encompass a variety of forms and styles. Also considered eligible under this subtype are apartments within single-family dwellings and apartment buildings. Similar to organizational headquarters, this property subtype is associated with all themes.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Government Buildings were often the location of demonstrations in support of suffrage (e.g., the District Building). Government buildings may have also been the location where significant policy decisions related to women's suffrage occurred.

VOTING LOCATIONS

Schools and government buildings in the District may have been the sites of demonstrations related to voting, served as important polling places, or where district residents and women could register to vote for the first time.

SITES

Sites are non-building properties that are associated with significant suffrage events. A site is the location of a significant event where the location itself possesses historic value regardless of the value of any existing structure. Examples of suffrage-related sites include parks (e.g., Lafayette Square), streets (e.g., Pennsylvania Avenue), or other public spaces where people gathered for demonstrations, protests, or parades.

STRUCTURES

A structure encompasses resources that were not built for human shelter such as outdoor stages that were the site of a protest, demonstration, or events promoting suffrage. Examples include the Sylvan Theater on the grounds of the Washington Monument.

Recommendations

FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Several topics explored as part of the development of this context warrant further research. This study recommends the following topics/themes for more in-depth context studies, thesis studies/dissertations, and/or oral histories.

THEME 3: WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ORGANIZATIONS

While this theme explores the broad history of women's suffrage organizations in Washington, DC, more focused studies on particular organizations or groups of organizations could lead to a better understanding of their activities, platforms, and members, and aid in the preparation of nominations to the National Register or DC Inventory of Historic Sites.

THEME 4: INTERSECTIONALITY

Women of color and women who did not conform to gender roles experienced the women's suffrage movement in varying and complex ways. Theme 4 provides a broad overview of these experiences, but additional research could delve more deeply into the activities and perspectives both of groups of women and specific activists. Because some traditional research sources skew towards the perspectives of the majority (i.e., White women), alternate sources, such as oral histories, organizational records, and minority-produced publications, may provide a more inclusive history of the suffrage movement. In particular, research for this study did not provide much information about Hispanic and/or Latina women's contributions to the women's suffrage movement, which a more focused study may address.

THEME 5: AFTER THE 19TH AMENDMENT - WOMEN, VOTING RIGHTS, AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (1920–1965)

While this chapter explores the involvement of women's suffrage organizations in Washington, DC, after the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, additional research could reveal more national and local organizations that were involved in educating women on voting and/or political processes and voting rights. Additionally, a more expansive study could explore more broadly these organizations' roles in the fight for women's rights including labor, citizenship, and the Equal Rights Amendment. Similar to Theme 3, more focused studies on particular organizations or groups of organizations could lead to a better understanding

of their activities, platforms, and members, and aid in the preparation of nominations to the National Register or DC Inventory of Historic Sites.

THEME 6: WOMEN AND THE DC SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT (1801–1973)

Activities surrounding national representation and home rule have shaped the lives of DC residents since 1801 and impacted both men and women of the District. Additional studies could explore the role of all District residents in the DC voting rights and home rule movements, particularly with the upcoming 50th anniversary of the passage of the Home Rule Act in 2023.

THEME 7: WOMEN AND THE YOUTH SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT (1940–1971)

While several recent studies have explored the history and significance of the 26th Amendment with the recent 50th anniversary of its passage, more information is needed to understand the role of DC residents and organizations in the youth vote movement. Future studies, particularly oral histories, are recommended to help identify specific people, organizations, and properties in Washington, DC, associated with this historic context.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES AND DC INVENTORY OF HISTORIC SITES

Existing National Register of Historic Places and DC Inventory of Historic Sites listings may contain little to no information on their association with the women's suffrage movement. In part, this is because the nominations focus on architectural significance. For example, the Dupont Circle National Register historic district was listed in the National Register in 1976 with a boundary increase in 1984 and a boundary increase/amendment in 2005. None of the nominations/amendments address the presence and significance of women's organizations and their headquarters that were located in the district. This report recommends that existing nominations be reviewed for missing or inadequate women's suffrage-related context and updated to document this important history. This report also recommends that these nominations be updated/amended to include the properties' historic significance related to this historic context.

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Appendix A: Timeline of Women's Suffrage by State[1]

Date	State/Territory	Type	Event
1869	Wyoming Territory	Full	Washington's territorial legislature gives women full suffrage, the first state or territory to approve full voting rights for women.
1870	Utah Territory	Full	Utah's territorial legislature gives women full suffrage.
1883	Washington Territory	Full	Washington's territorial legislature gives women full suffrage.
1887	Montana Territory	Full	Montana's territorial legislature gives women full suffrage.
1890	Wyoming	Full	Washington grants women full suffrage.
1893	Colorado	Full	Men vote to allow full suffrage to women, the first state to enact women's suffrage by popular election.
1896	Idaho	Full	Idaho grants women full suffrage.
1896	Utah	Full	Following statehood, Utah restores full voting rights for women. Utah women had lost the right to vote in 1887 after Congress passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act.
1910	Washington	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1911	California	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1912	Arizona	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1912	Kansas	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1912	Oregon	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1913	Alaska Territory	Full	Alaska Territory grants women full suffrage.
1913	Illinois	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in presidential elections.
1914	Montana	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1914	Nevada	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1917	Arkansas	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in primary elections.
1917	New York	Full	Women are granted full voting rights.
1917	Nebraska	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in presidential elections.
1917	North Dakota	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in presidential elections.
1917	Rhode Island	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in presidential elections.
1918	Michigan	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1918	Oklahoma	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1918	South Dakota	Full	Women are granted full suffrage.
1918	Texas	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in primary elections.
1919	Iowa	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in presidential elections.
1919	Maine	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in presidential elections.
1919	Minnesota	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in presidential elections.
1919	Missouri	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in presidential elections.

[1] This timeline focuses on full suffrage and voting in presidential election, not on local elections such as elections related to school boards.

Date	State/Territory	Type	Event
1919	Tennessee	Partial	Women are allowed to vote in presidential elections.
1919	Wisconsin	Partial	Woman are allowed to vote in presidential elections.
1920	Alabama	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Arkansas	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Connecticut	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Delaware	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Florida	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Georgia	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Indiana[2]	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Kentucky	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Louisiana	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Maryland	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Massachusetts	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Mississippi	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	New Hampshire	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	New Jersey	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	New Mexico	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	North Carolina	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Ohio[3]	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Pennsylvania	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	South Carolina	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Texas	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Vermont	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	Virginia	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
1920	West Virginia	Full	Women are granted full suffrage after the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

[2] Women in Indiana were granted the right to vote in presidential elections in the summer of 1917, but the Indiana Supreme Court struck down the partial suffrage law in 1917.

[3] Women in Ohio were granted the right to vote in presidential elections in February 1917, but it was repealed in November 1917.

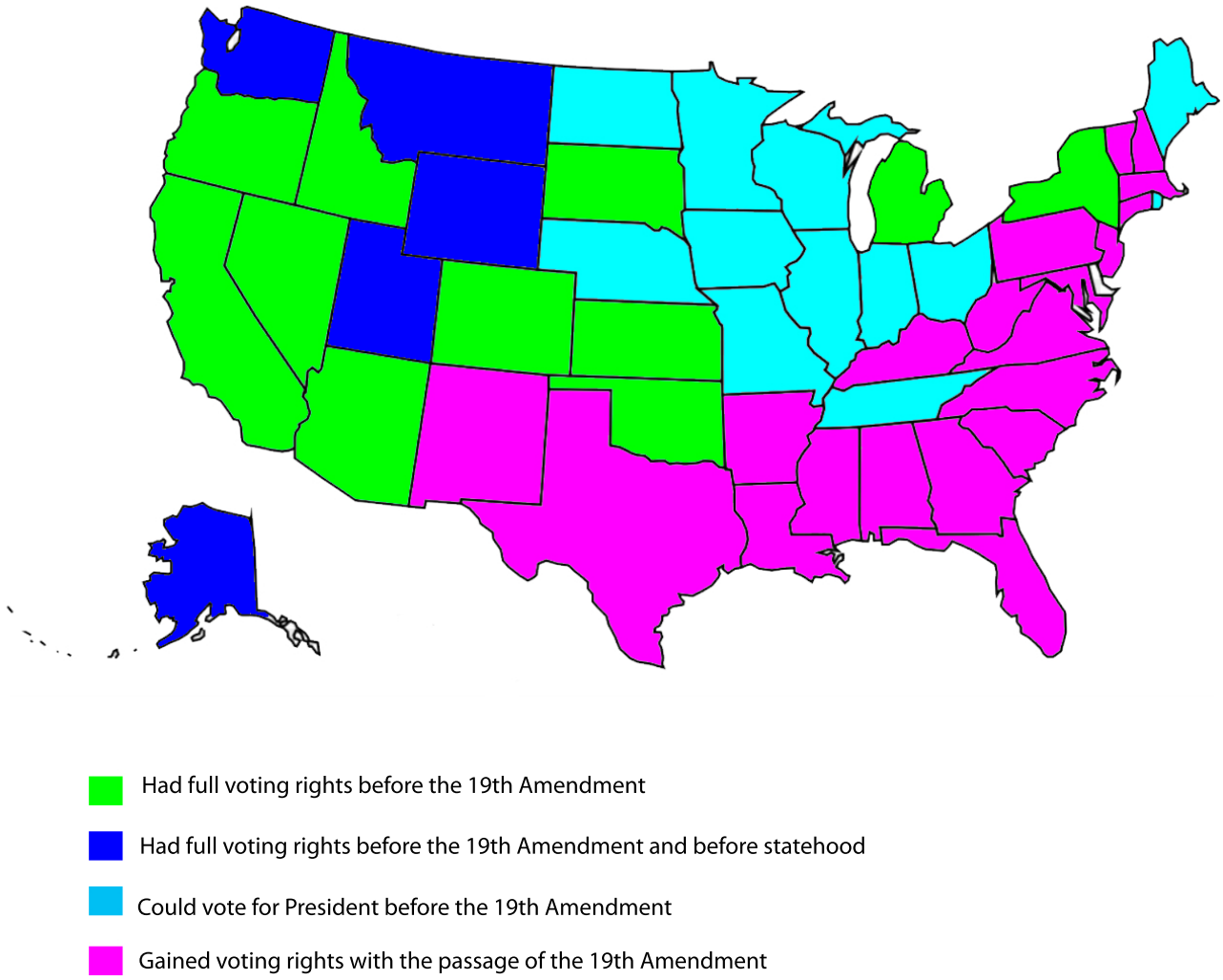

Figure A-1. Map of the United States illustrating when states granted women the right to vote.

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Appendix B: Timeline of Women's Suffrage Events[1]

DATE	EVENT
1848	In July, the Seneca Falls Convention is held to advocate for the social, civil, and religious rights of women. The convention results in a "Declaration of Sentiments" that includes a resolution calling for women's suffrage.
1850	The first National Woman's Rights Convention, organized by Lucy Stone, is held in Worcester, Massachusetts.
1851	Sojourner Truth delivers her "I Am as Strong as Any Man" speech in Akron, Ohio.
1866	The American Equal Rights Association is founded in Boston, Massachusetts. The intent of the new organization is to secure equal rights for all, regardless of sex or race.
1868	States ratify the 14th Amendment, which defines citizenship and guarantees equal protection under the law.
1869	The Wyoming Territory legislature grants women the right to vote and hold public office.
1869	The 15th Amendment to the Constitution grants the vote to Black men, but not to women. In the aftermath, the women's suffrage movement splits into two organizations, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) and the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA).
1874	Temperance advocates form the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).
1878	The "Anthony Amendment" for woman suffrage is introduced in Congress and reintroduced every year until 1896.
1882	Congress passes the Chinese Exclusion Act, preventing Chinese people who are not part of the merchant class from entering the United States.
1890	The AWSA and NWSA merge to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).
1893	Colorado grants women the right to vote.
1895	Utah grants women the right to vote.
1896	Idaho grants women the right to vote.
1896	The National Association of Colored Women forms from the merger of the Colored Women's League and the National Federation of Afro-American Women, with Mary Church Terrell as president.
1904	The National Association of Colored Women incorporates as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.
1908	Women at Howard University establish the Alpha Kappa sorority, the first Greek-letter sorority for Black college women.
1910	Alice Paul, returning home from suffrage activities in England, addresses the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) annual convention in Washington, DC, and endorses the militant tactics of British suffragists.

[1] The following timeline was developed from the following sources: Library of Congress, " Women of Protest: Photographs from the Records of the National Woman's Party," accessed 5 January 2022 at https://www.loc.gov/collections/women-of-protest/articles-and-essays/historial-timeline-of-the-national-womans-party/1930-to-1997/; DC Statehood, "Timeline - 221 Years of the District of Columbia's Efforts to Restore Self-Government," accessed 5 January 2022 at https://dcstatehoodyeswecan.org/j/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=98:timeline-dcs-quest-to-regain-its-democratic-rights&catid=46:st%E2%80%A6; National Park Service, " US Women's Suffrage Timeline 1648 to 2016," accessed 5 January 2022 at https://www.nps.gov/articles/us-suffrage-timeline-1648-to-2016.htm; Page Harrington, I*nterpreting the Legacy of Women's Suffrage at Museums and Historic Sites*, 101-106.

DATE	EVENT
1910	Washington state grants women the right to vote.
1911	California grants women the right to vote.
1912	In December, NAWSA appoints Alice Paul as the chairman of its Congressional Committee.
1913	NAWSA's Congressional Committee establishes its office in the basement of 1420 F Street NW, Washington, DC.
1913	On March 3, the Congressional Committee and local suffrage groups organize a suffrage parade in Washington, held the day before President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. On March 17, Alice Paul heads suffrage delegation to President Woodrow Wilson.
1913	In April, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns establish the Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage (CU). By the summer, the CU has established branches in various states.
1913	In December, NAWSA leadership urges Alice Paul and Lucy Burns to resign from the CU. They refuse, and NAWSA selects a new Congressional Committee.
1913	Former members of Alpha Kappa Alpha found the Delta Sigma Theta sorority at Howard University.
1913	Illinois grants women the right to vote in presidential elections.
1914	On March 19, the Senate votes for the first time since 1887 on the federal woman suffrage amendment. The bill is defeated, but reintroduced the following day.
1914	Montana and Nevada grant women the right to vote.
1915	In January, the House votes for the first time on the federal woman suffrage amendment and defeats the measure.
1915	In March, the CU's National Advisory Council adopts a constitution and restructures the CU as a national organization. Despite objections from NAWSA, CU sends organizers to all states to plan conventions and establishes state branches. The CU holds its first national convention in Washington, DC, in December.
1916	In April, 23 CU members leave Washington, DC, on a five-week train tour known as "The Suffrage Special" to garner support for the amendment among women voters.
1916	In June, the National Woman's Party, briefly known as the Woman's Party of Western Voters, is formed in Chicago at a CU convention. The NWP and CU coexist as complementary organizations.
1917	On January 10, the NWP begins silent pickets in front of the White House.
1917	March 1–4, the CU and NWP merge into one organization, the NWP, at a convention in Washington, DC.
1917	On April 2 and 4, respectively, the suffrage amendment is reintroduced in the House and Senate.
1917	New York grants women the right to vote.
1917	Arkansas grants women the right to vote in primary, but not general, elections.
1917	Nebraska, North Dakota, and Rhode Island grant women the right to partial suffrage.
1917	In June, police begin arresting NWP pickets, charged with obstructing traffic. More than 27 women are arrested and six are sentenced to three days in District jail, the first of 168 women to serve prison time for suffrage activities. In August, bystanders begin to attack the pickets.
1917	In November, Alice Paul and Rose Winslow begin a hunger strike after they are rejected treatment as political prisoners. They are subjected to force-feedings one week later and Paul is transferred to a psychiatric ward at District jail as a means to intimidate and discredit her. Force used on suffrage prisoners in "Night of Terror" prompts public outcry against their treatment. Government authorities later release Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, and other suffrage prisoners.
1918	South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Michigan grant women the right to vote.
1918	On January 9, President Wilson publicly declares support for the suffrage amendment. The following day, the House passes the amendment by two-thirds majority.

DATE	EVENT
1918	Despite U.S. federal appeals court ruling that arrests and detainment of White House suffrage pickets is unconstitutional, police arrest suffrage demonstrators protesting Senate inaction in Lafayette Park.
1918	In September, the woman suffrage amendment is reintroduced in the Senate. President Wilson asks the Senate to pass the amendment as a war measure. In October, the Senate defeats the amendment, two votes shy of the required two-thirds majority.
1919	On May 21, the House passes the federal woman suffrage amendment. The Senate follows on June 4. The NWP begins a campaign to obtain ratification of the 19th Amendment by the required three-fourths majority, or 36 states. On June 10, Michigan and Wisconsin become the first states to ratify the amendment.
1920	On August 18, Tennessee becomes the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment. On August 26, the 19th Amendment becomes law.
1920	On November 2, women across the United States vote for the first time in the presidential election.
1920	NAWSA reorganizes as the League of Women Voters six months before the 19th Amendment is ratified. The organization begins as a “mighty political experiment” aimed to help 20 million newly enfranchised women exercise their responsibilities as voters.
1920	Women of the District of Columbia organize a local chapter of the League of Women Voters.
1920	Women at Howard University found the Zeta Phi Beta sorority.
1921	The Washington, DC, chapter of the League of Women Voters is officially established in May.
1923	Alice Paul drafts the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).
1924	Congress passes the Snyder Act, which grants Indigenous people born in the United States full citizenship.
1926	The Washington, DC, chapter of the League of Women Voters officially changes their name to “The Voteless” League of Women Voters to bring attention to the fact that residents of DC were not enfranchised.
1926	Zitkála-Šá establishes the National Council of American Indians to lobby for education and civil rights for Native people—including access to the ballot.
1935	Mary McLeod Bethune founds the National Council of Negro Women in Washington, DC, as an umbrella organization to improve the lives of Black women.
1938	A Citizens’ Conference of 271 local organizations finances a plebiscite with two questions—“[D]o you want to vote for President and for members of Congress from the District of Columbia?, and do you want to vote for officials of your own city government in the District?” The District Suffrage League set up voting places in 38 public schools. 95,538 people vote on April 30th, most supporting both measures.
1940	For the first time the Democratic National Convention includes a plank in its national platform favoring suffrage in national elections for the people of DC.
1942	The National League of Women Voters back suffrage for the District of Columbia, the first time the powerful organization supports a local issue on a national scale. In September, 1,000 members plan to distribute 12,000 leaflets entitled, “Washington: Our National Home Town.”
1943	Congress repeals the Chinese Exclusion Act. Although it allows Chinese immigrants to enter the United States, it creates a quota limiting visas for Chinese immigrants to 105 per year based on race, rather than citizenship or national origin.
1946	President Harry Truman becomes the first president to support DC Suffrage.
1946	DC suffrage organizations hold another plebiscite with two questions: 1) Do you want the right to vote for officials of your own city government in the District of Columbia, and 2) Do you want the right to vote for President of the United States and for members of Congress from the District of Columbia. Over 167,000 participate.
1955	In 1955, Congress passes the District of Columbia Election Code that establishes a board of elections, procedures for registration, nominations, and voting for officials of political parties (national committee men and women, delegates to presidential nominating conventions, and local party officials).
1956	DC Residents are able to vote for party officials and delegates to the Democratic and Republican Parties.

DATE	EVENT
1961	On March 29, 1961, the 23rd Amendment to the Constitution is ratified by 39 states, one more than necessary. It gives DC the same number of electors in the electoral college that it would be entitled to if it were a state, but no more than the least populous state.
1964	DC residents are able to vote for President of the United States for the first time since the creation of the District.
1964	The 24th Amendment to the US Constitution is ratified. It formally abolishes poll taxes and literacy tests as barriers to voting.
1965	President Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act into law, which prohibits racial discrimination in voting.
1967	President Lyndon Johnson reorganizes the District government and creates a presidentially appointed council of nine members and a presidentially appointed commissioner and assistant commissioner of the District of Columbia (mayor and deputy mayor equivalents).
1969	No fewer than 60 resolutions to lower the voting age to 18 are introduced in Congress, but none result in action.
1969	In April, the NAACP Youth and College Division sponsors a National Youth Mobilization conference in Washington, DC, organized by Carolyn Quilloin. More than 2,500 youth lobby with their senators and congressmen for the passage of the Vote 18 legislation.
1969	The National Education Association launches the Youth Franchise Coalition (YFC), located at 1525 M Street NW.
1970	Congress passes the District of Columbia Election Act of 1970, giving D.C. the right to elect a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives.
1970	Congress amends the 1970 extension of the Voting Rights Act to lower the voting age to 18. With the 1970 case Oregon v. Mitchell, the U.S. Supreme Court issues a verdict that 18- to 20-year-olds would be eligible in federal elections, not in state or local elections. Consequently, support grows for a constitutional amendment that would set the national voting at of 18 in all elections
1971	Congress passes the 26th Amendment and it is sent to the states for ratification. After only two months, the required 38 states ratify the amendment. On July 5, 1971, President Nixon signs it into law.
1973	In December, Congress passes the D.C. Self-Government and Governmental Reorganization Act (Home Rule Act) providing for an elected mayor, a 13-member Council and Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and delegating certain powers to the new government, subject to Congressional oversight and veto.