

# VOTES FOR WOMEN: A PORTRAIT OF PERSISTENCE

*VOTES FOR WOMEN: A PORTRAIT OF PERSISTENCE* IS ORGANIZED BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY. THIS PROJECT RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM THE SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S HISTORY INITIATIVE.

**VOTES FOR  
WOMEN**  
*A Portrait of Persistence*



BECAUSE OF  
HER STORY



# VOTES FOR WOMEN: A PORTRAIT OF PERSISTENCE

The story of women's suffrage is a story of voting rights, of inclusion in and exclusion from the franchise, and of our civic development as a nation. *Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence*, a poster exhibition from the Smithsonian, celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment and explores the complexity of the women's suffrage movement and the relevance of this history to Americans' lives today. The crusade for women's suffrage is one of the longest reform movements in American history. Between 1832 and 1920, women citizens organized for the right to vote, agitating first in their states or territories and also, simultaneously, through petitioning for a federal amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

# VOTES FOR WOMEN: A PORTRAIT OF PERSISTENCE

Based on the National Portrait Gallery exhibition of the same name, Votes for Women seeks to expand visitors' understanding of the suffrage movement in the United States. The poster exhibition addresses women's political activism, explores the racism that challenged universal suffrage, and documents the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment which prohibits the government from denying U.S. citizens the right to vote on the basis of gender. It also touches upon the suffrage movement's relevance to current conversations on voting and voting rights across America.

# VOTES FOR WOMEN: A PORTRAIT OF PERSISTENCE

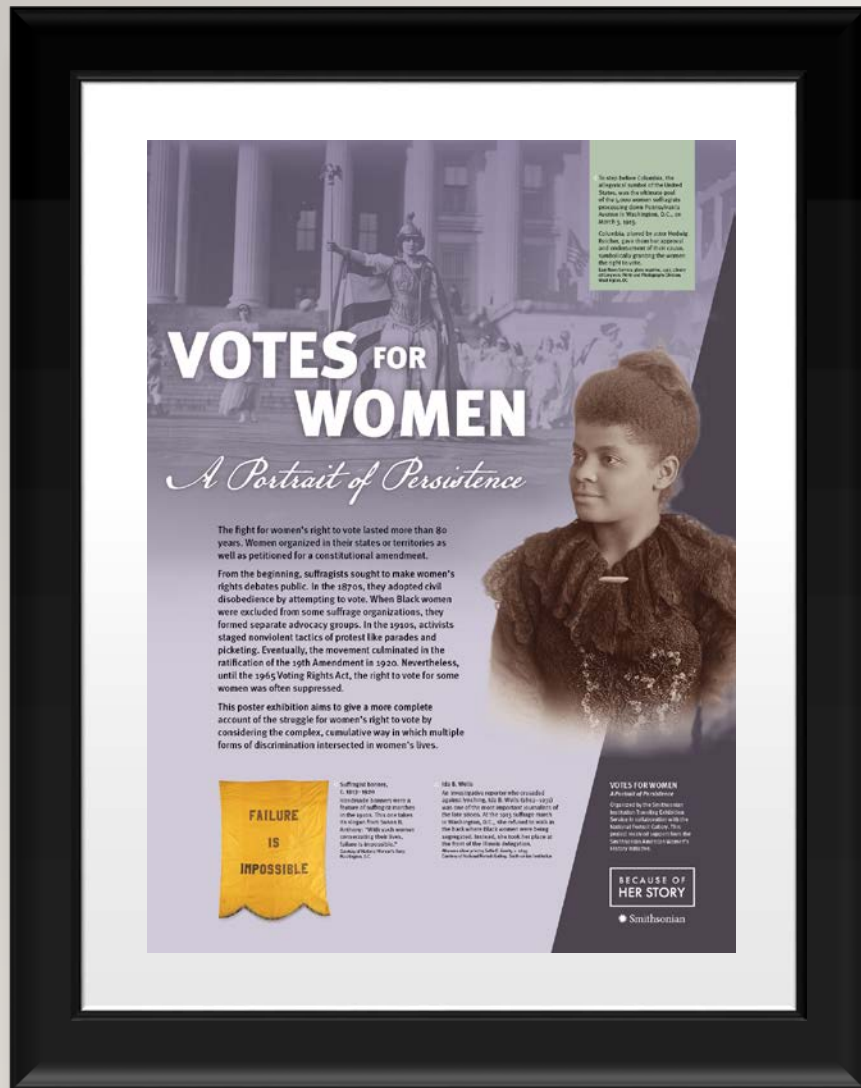
**Votes for Women:** A Portrait of Persistence is organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service in collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery. This project received support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

## About the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative

The Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative, *Because of Her Story* is one of the country's most ambitious undertakings to research, collect, document, display and share the compelling story of women. It will deepen our understanding of women's contributions to the nation and the world. More information about the initiative is available at [womenshistory.si.edu](https://womenshistory.si.edu).

# VOTES FOR WOMEN A PORTRAIT OF PERSISTENCE

- The fight for women's right to vote lasted more than 80 years. Women organized in their states or territories as well as petitioned for a constitutional amendment.
- From the beginning, [suffragists](#) sought to make women's rights debates public. In the 1870s, they adopted civil disobedience by attempting to vote. When Black women were excluded from some suffrage organizations, they formed separate advocacy groups. In the 1910s, activists staged nonviolent tactics of protest like parades and picketing. Eventually, the movement culminated in the ratification of the [19th Amendment](#) in 1920. Nevertheless, until the [1965 Voting Rights Act](#), the right to vote for some women was often suppressed.



# WOMEN'S VOTING RIGHTS ORIGINATED IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

- The focus on voting rights grew out of a much longer campaign for women's legal rights. In most states until the 1880s, when a woman married, her husband assumed control of her person, property, and money. The women's movement sought to increase women's rights.
- The antislavery movement also played a role. When some male abolitionists blocked women from joining their organizations, women formed their own societies, including the first female antislavery society, in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1832. Black women were among its founders.
- By the first national women's rights convention in 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York, women of all races were decrying laws that assumed that "citizen" meant "white male."

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**Late State marriage act, 1830**  
When Massachusetts State passed a law that gave women more legal rights, it sought to address the legal identity of women in the present laws of marriage which assumed the legal identity of the woman.

**Lucretia Coffin Mott**  
A former Quaker, Lucretia Mott organized several meetings for abolition and for women's rights. She helped lead the newly organized Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1832. Mott was one of the founders of the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. She was also one of the founders of the National Woman's Suffrage Association in 1849. Mott was a prominent leader in the women's rights movement.

**Amelia B. Evans**  
Evans was a prominent leader in the women's rights movement. She was one of the founders of the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. She was also one of the founders of the National Woman's Suffrage Association in 1849. Evans was a prominent leader in the women's rights movement.

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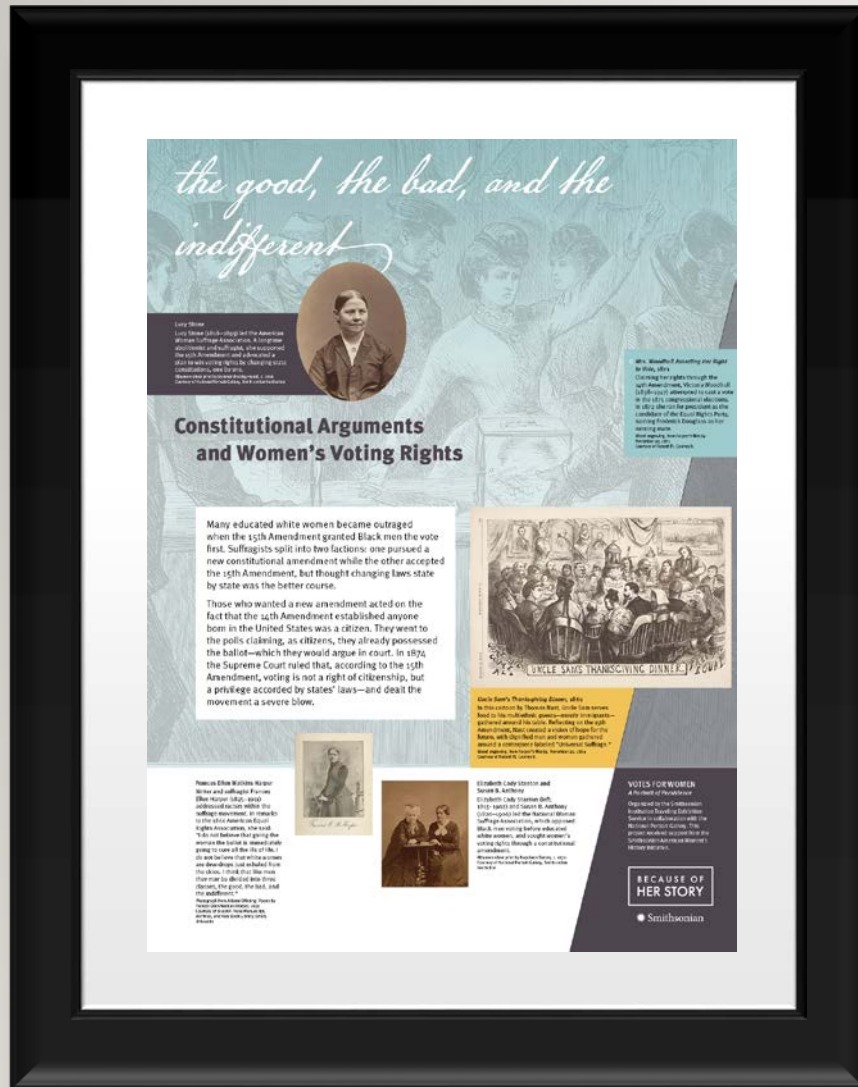
**the injustice of the present laws**

**VOTES FOR WOMEN**  
A Part of the American History

**BECAUSE OF HER STORY**  
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# CONSTITUTIONAL ARGUMENTS AND WOMEN'S VOTING RIGHTS

- Many educated white women became outraged when the 15th Amendment granted Black men the vote first. Suffragists split into two factions: one pursued a new constitutional amendment while the other accepted the 15th Amendment, but thought changing laws state by state was the better course.
- Those who wanted a new amendment acted on the fact that the 14th Amendment established anyone born in the United States was a citizen. They went to the polls claiming, as citizens, they already possessed the ballot—which they would argue in court. In 1874 the Supreme Court ruled that, according to the 15th Amendment, voting is not a right of citizenship, but a privilege accorded by states' laws—and dealt the movement a severe blow.





# THE CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP SEEMS STRAIGHTFORWARD, BUT

- The 14th Amendment states that anyone born or naturalized in the United States is a citizen. But it goes on to specify voters must be male. The 15th Amendment asserts the vote cannot be denied because of race, color, or “previous condition of servitude.” But it leaves women out of the picture. These amendments contained enough ambiguity to allow local laws and regulations to deny the vote, education, and other benefits to many citizens. Native Americans were not even granted citizenship until 1924.
- Women of color organized beyond merely voting rights. Confronting a wide range of social issues, they worked to educate their people, confront white authority, claim their dignity, and campaign for justice.

*an Indian is a person*

## The Concept of Citizenship Seems Straightforward, but...



**Susette La Flesche Tibbles**  
In 1875 Susette Tibbles (1854–1902) witnessed the forced removal of the Ponca from Nebraska. She served as an interpreter in the story and helped decision that ended the Ponca imprisonment and led to the historic ruling, “an Indian is a person within the meaning of the law of the United States.”  
“Woman Who saved the Ponca War,”  
c. 1875  
Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

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**Felisa Rincón de Gautier**  
Although the people of Puerto Rico (an unincorporated territory of the U.S.) have had United States citizenship since 1917, Puerto Rican women were not granted the right to vote until the mid-1930s. Felisa Rincón de Gautier (1867–1934) was active in the campaign to make that happen. In 1914, she was appointed, then later elected, as mayor of San Juan, the first female mayor of a capital city in the Americas.  
Charcoal on paper by Antoni Martorell, 1934  
Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of the Martorells

**Zitkala-Sá**  
A Lousia Simon, Zitkala-Sá (1876–1938) helped found both the Society of the American Indians in 1907 and the National Council of American Indians in 1926. She fought tirelessly for Native American rights.  
Photograph by Joseph T. Kuhn, 1901  
Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution



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# THE NEW WOMAN

- In the 1890s, the image of the “[New Woman](#)”—young, athletic, educated, and devoted to progressive ideas, especially suffrage—emerged as a radical social force in American society. Awakening the public to an awareness of gender inequality, she ushered in a new century. Black and white women alike embraced the idea of the New Woman, and the image of an educated woman freely moving outside the home inspired many. Women saw education as the first step to progress.

*onward and upward*

**Marie W. Lloyd Bellows**  
An abolitionist in Norfolk, Mass., Marie W. Lloyd Bellows (1827–1892) became a vocal proponent of women's rights and education for Black girls. In 1854, she founded the Institute for Training African Girls. She is buried in the same cemetery as the first Black woman to attend a college in the United States, Anna Julia Cooper.

**The New Woman, 1890s**  
Many women used to believe that their only duty was to take care of their homes. Through their connections, they began to see the world outside as an opportunity to make a difference.

**Margaret Warner Washington**  
Founder of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Margaret Warner Washington (1854–1925) worked to improve the lives of Black women in the segregated South. She was not an athlete, but she was a leading member of the National League of Colored Women, which promoted the cause of Black women's education.

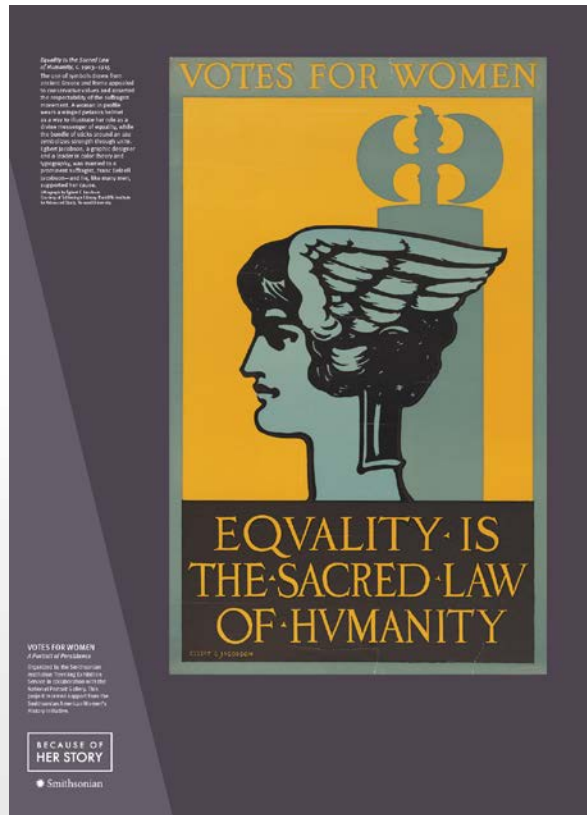
**Mary Church Terrell**  
Mary Church Terrell (1875–1935) was an African American woman's rights activist. She was the first Black woman to attend a college in the United States. She was also the first Black woman to be elected to the National Association of Colored Women.

**Anna Julia Cooper**  
An educator, writer, and activist, Anna Julia Cooper (1862–1925) was the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. in the United States. She was also the first Black woman to be elected to the National Association of Colored Women.

**WOMEN FOR WOMEN**  
A History of the Suffrage Movement

**BECAUSE OF HER STORY**  
Smithsonian

# EQUALITY IS THE SACRED LAW OF HUMANITY. C. 1903-1915



- The use of symbols drawn from ancient Greece and Rome appealed to conservative values and asserted the respectability of the suffragist movement. A woman in profile wears a winged petasos helmet as a way to illustrate her role as a divine messenger of equality, while the bundle of sticks around an axe symbolizes strength through unity. [Egbert Jacobson](#), a graphic designer and a leader in color theory and typography, was married to a prominent suffragist, Franc Delzell Jacobson—and he, like many men, supported her cause.
- Lithograph by Egbert C. Jacobson Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University

# SUFFRAGISTS WERE POLITICAL GENIUSES

- In the 1910s, suffragists in the United States decided publicity was their best course of action to change the country's mindset about women's voting rights. Inspired by the work of British suffragettes, and led by [Alice Paul](#), they turned to non-violent spectacles considered shockingly militant for women at that time, most notably parades and picketing of the White House.
- On [March 3, 1913, Paul and the National Woman's Party](#) organized thousands of women—many wearing white—to march down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. The women's march attracted a crowd of more than 500,000 and upstaged the inauguration speech of President Wilson the next day. This was the first time anyone had ever staged a non-violent march on Washington.

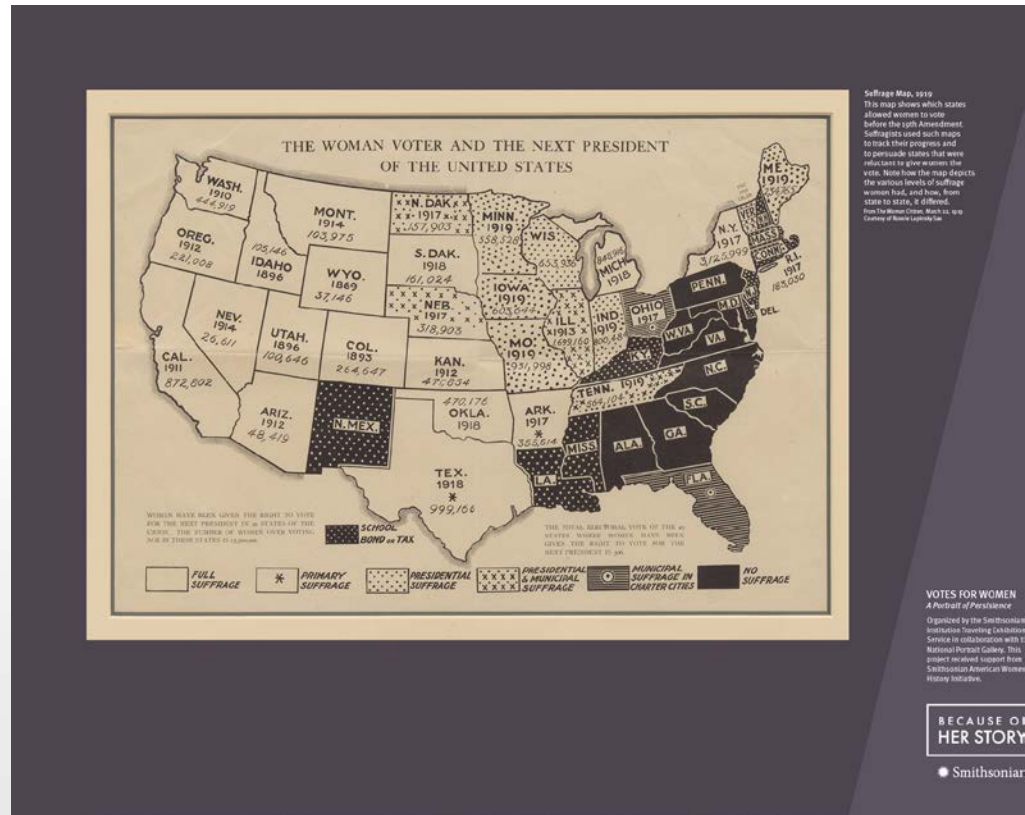


# AMERICAN SUFFRAGE HAD COURAGE

- In the fight for the vote, suffragists took risks women today don't think of as dangerous. But protesting in public, such as picketing the White House, was considered unseemly and undignified. [Mary Church Terrell](#) was the only Black woman to participate, in part due to prejudice, but also because being jailed was life-threatening for women of color.
- In 1915—a time when it was rare to see women driving—[suffragist “envoys”](#) drove across the country and gathered more than 500,000 signatures in a “monster petition.” During World War I, suffragists sponsored all-women teams of doctors and nurses to the front lines, where they endured direct bombardment. These compelling tactics created massive support for the suffrage cause.



# SUFFRAGE MAP 1919



- This map shows which states allowed women to vote before the 19th Amendment. Suffragists used such maps to track their progress and to persuade states that were reluctant to give women the vote. Note how the map depicts the various levels of suffrage women had, and how, from state to state, it differed.
- From The Woman Citizen, March 22, 1919  
Courtesy of Ronnie Lapinsky Sax

# THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT WAS AN INCOMPLETE VICTORY

- A bill for amending the Constitution and giving women the vote passed both chambers of Congress in 1919. The suffragists finally triumphed in August 1920 when 36 states—the necessary three-fourths of the country's 48 states—voted to ratify it:
- “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”
- But passage of the 19th Amendment was not a final triumph for Americans’ right to vote. Racist laws still blocked many people of color from voting, and kept Native Americans and Asian immigrants from becoming citizens. The true conclusion to the 19th Amendment was the 1965 Voting Rights Act, protecting the vote for all Americans.

**Women's Ballot Box, Indiana, 1917-1918**  
Some states let women vote for the first time, but it was only in 1917 that the 19th Amendment was passed. The box is made of wood and metal, with a handle and a keyhole. It was used to collect votes for women in the 1917-1918 election.

**"The New" Bill, 1919**  
As soon as a proposal of the 19th Amendment was introduced in Congress, it was called "The New" Bill. It was a proposal to amend the Constitution to give women the right to vote.

**Long Walks, 1919**  
A woman's choice to vote was not enough. She had to go to the polls. In 1919, women in the United States had to walk long distances to the polls. Some women walked for miles to reach the polls. Some women walked for hours. Some women walked for days.

**The 19th Amendment Was an Incomplete Victory**

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*"We are sick and tired of being sick and tired"* — Fannie Lou Hamer, 1964

**Allice Paul, 1919**  
Allice Paul, a leader of the suffragist movement, was arrested in 1919 for leading a parade in Washington, D.C. She was held in the Occoquan Workhouse for 14 months. She was one of the "Silent Sentinels" who picketed the White House for years.

**Patsy T. Mink, 1965**  
Patsy T. Mink was the first woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. She was elected in 1965 from Hawaii. She was the first woman to represent a state in the House of Representatives.

**Votes for Women**  
A bill for amending the Constitution and giving women the vote passed both chambers of Congress in 1919. The suffragists finally triumphed in August 1920 when 36 states—the necessary three-fourths of the country's 48 states—voted to ratify it.

**Because of Her Story**  
Smithsonian

# SUFFRAGE PAGEANT, 1913

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- On March 3, 1913, 5,000 women suffragists processed down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. Played by actor Hedwig Reicher, Columbia gave them her approval and endorsement of their cause, symbolically granting the women the right to vote.
- *George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress*





# IDA B. WELLS

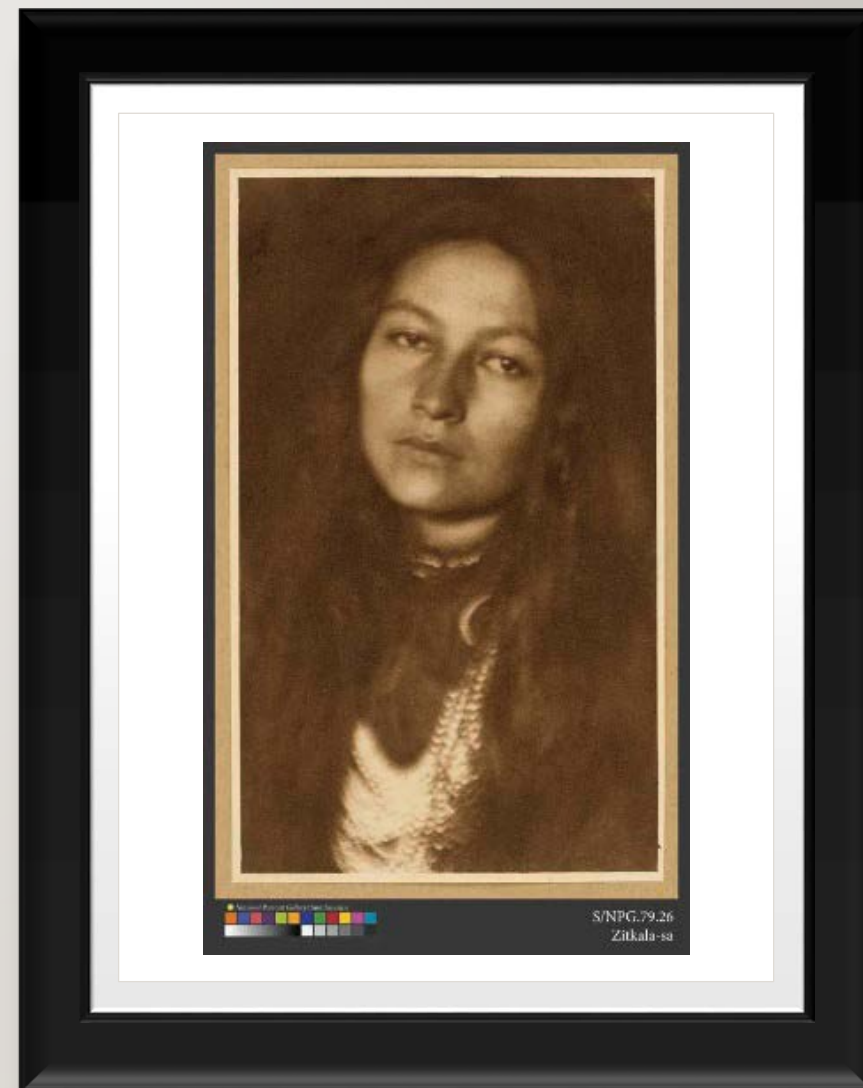
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- An investigative reporter who crusaded against lynching, [Ida B. Wells](#) (1862–1931) was one of the most important journalists of the late 1800s. At the 1913 suffrage march in Washington, D.C., she refused to walk in the back where Black women were being segregated. Instead, she took her place at the front of the Illinois delegation.
- *Albumen silver print by Sallie E. Garrity, c. 1893*  
*Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution*



# ZITKÁLA-ŠÁ

- Women of color organized beyond merely voting rights. A Lakota Sioux, [Zitkála-Šá](#) (1876–1938) fought tirelessly for Native American rights. She helped found both the Society of the American Indians in 1907 and the National Council of American Indians in 1926.
- *Photogravure by Joseph T. Kelley, 1898 (printed 1901)*  
*Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution*



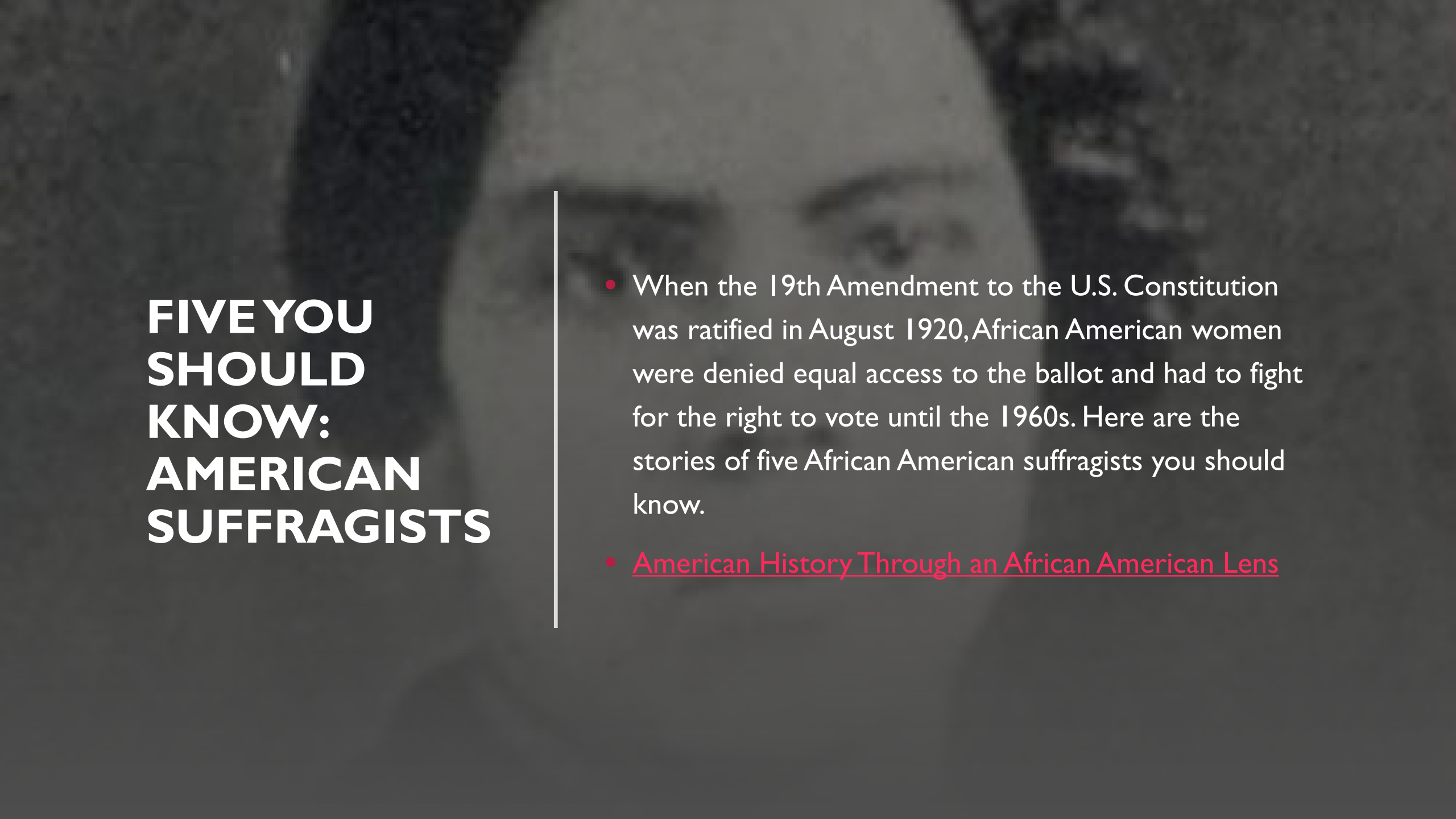
# COLLEGE WOMEN PICKETING IN FRONT OF THE WHITE HOUSE, 1917

- In the first such **protest** in history, women picket the White House every day from January 1917 until the 19th Amendment was ratified in August 1920. On this day, college-educated women worked the picket line.
- *Gelatin silver print Courtesy of National Woman's Party, Washington, D.C.*




**HOW DID WOMEN EARN THE RIGHT TO VOTE?**

**AND HOW ARE THEY ADVOCATING FOR SOCIAL  
CHANGE TODAY?**



# FIVE YOU SHOULD KNOW: AMERICAN SUFFRAGISTS

- When the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified in August 1920, African American women were denied equal access to the ballot and had to fight for the right to vote until the 1960s. Here are the stories of five African American suffragists you should know.
- [American History Through an African American Lens](#)

A vintage wooden wagon with a canopy, used for political campaigning. The wagon is covered with various signs. The largest sign in the center reads "VOTE - YES - ON AMENDMENT - NO 1 ON - ELECTION - DAY". Below it, another sign says "ALL - AREAS - PERTAINING TO - THE - HOME - ARE - WOMAN'S - BUSINESS AS - WELL - AS - MANS. MOTHERS - NEED - THE - VOTE". To the right, a sign lists states: "WOMEN WYOMING COLORADO IDAHO UTAH WASHINGTON CALIFORNIA OREGON ARIZONA" and "VOTE IN ILLINOIS MONTANA NEVADA NORTH DAKOTA NEBRASKA RHODE ISLAND NEW YORK". Other smaller signs include "YES - FOR - WOMEN THE WOMANS - JOURNAL 5 CENTS - A - COPY", "BE - JUST - FEAR - NOT WOMENS - WOMEN", and "THE - WOMANS - JOURNAL".

# NATIONAL YOUTH SUMMIT - WOMAN SUFFRAGE: THE BALLOT AND BEYOND

- The National Museum of American History's 2019 National Youth Summit looked at woman suffrage as an example of how groups with limited political power have shaped and continue to shape our democracy.
- [Full Program](#)



# THE SUFFRAGIST

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- These videos from the National Museum of American History examine the actions taken by suffragists in 1917 as they fought to win the right to vote. Students learn through the experience of Rebecca, a historical character who is deciding whether to join the movement.
- [Videos](#)

# GIRLHOOD (IT'S COMPLICATED)

- Get a behind-the-scenes preview of the upcoming exhibition, [\*Girlhood \(It's complicated\)\*](#), with Jean Case, co-chair of the [\*\*Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative\*\*](#)
- **Advisory Committee, Dr. Kathleen Franz, curator and chair of the National Museum of American History's Division of Work History, and Megan Smith, senior creative developer in the museum's Education and Impact team.** The exhibition will open at the National Museum of American History this fall, and SITES will travel the exhibition beginning in 2023. Learn more about the traveling exhibition, [\*\*exhibit link\*\*](#).



# WOMEN'S LIBERATION PLAYLIST

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- This playlist of songs of activism and protest was compiled by Meredith Holmgren, Curator of American Women's Music at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.
- [Playlist](#)





## BECAUSE OF HER STORY: ACTIVISM

- Progress on every major social issue of our time has its roots in the activism and advocacy of everyday people in the past. Read stories about women activists, explore objects from the Smithsonian's collections, and dive into other related resources.
- [Activism](#)

# VOTES FOR WOMEN: A PORTRAIT OF PERSISTENCE

- The story of woman suffrage is a story of voting rights, of inclusion in and exclusion from the franchise, and of our civic development as a nation. *Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence* is a free, dynamic poster exhibition from SITES based on the National Portrait Gallery's exhibition of the same name.
- [A Portrait](#)

# EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

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## **National Portrait Gallery**

Votes for Women [exhibition website](#)

Votes for Women [collection search results](#)

## **American Women's History Initiative**

Explore the historical record of the accomplishments of American women [here](#).

## ***Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence* on the Smithsonian Learning Lab**


[A collection](#) of text, education prompts and images related to the poster exhibition

**Preferred browser: Google Chrome**

## **National Museum of African American History and Culture**

[Blog posts, collection story\\*](#), event and news about women's suffrage

[Collection](#) search results for women's suffrage



## **National Museum of American History**

Women's history [resources](#)

Woman suffrage [search results](#)

Woman suffrage collections [search results](#)

History Explorer suffrage [search results](#)

## **Smithsonian American Art Museum**

“Who Tells Your Story? Exploring Women and Identity?” [video](#)

“Remaking the Rules: Exploring Women Who Broke Barriers” [video](#)

“Persisting and Resisting: Exploring Women as Activists” [video](#)

## **National Museum of the American Indian**

Native American Women [online resources](#)

## **Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum**

Women's suffrage [search results](#)



## **National Postal Museum**

Women's suffrage collections [search results](#)

Research [articles](#) on women in the U.S. Postal System

*Women on Stamps* [virtual exhibition](#)

## **League of Women Voters**

Women's suffrage [search results](#)

## **Library of Congress**

[Teacher resources](#), [lesson plans](#) and [primary source sets](#)

*Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote* [exhibition website](#)

## **National Woman's Party (NWP)**

[NWP collections](#)

[NWP exhibits](#)

## **U.S. National Archives and Records Administration**

*Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote* [exhibit](#)

Women's Rights [page](#)

Woman Suffrage [educator resources](#)

Woman Suffrage primary sources and teaching [activities](#) on DocsTeach

*19th Amendment* online featured [documents](#)



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[www.sites.si.edu](http://www.sites.si.edu)



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