



PROLOGUE:
HISTORICAL ISSUES FOR
CONTEMPORARY DELIBERATION



SUFFRAGE 1915

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

About the David Mathews Center for Civic Life

The David Mathews Center for Civic Life is a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to strengthening Alabama’s civic life by engaging communities around issues of public importance, both historic and contemporary. Our programs for youth and adults foster skills, habits, and community practices that build and preserve a healthy democracy. We are a 501(c)3 organization located at the American Village in Montevallo, Alabama with a statewide impact. Learn more at www.mathewscenter.org.

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FOREWORD

“Through deliberation, we provide students with the opportunity to engage in conversations that explore historic events and current issues from many perspectives in a way which encourages critical thought, reasoning skills, empathy, active listening, and collaboration.”

Place-Based Deliberative Learning in the Classroom, page 2

This issue guide is designed for classroom deliberation on an era of Alabama history deserving more of our attention: the Women’s Suffrage Movement. Deliberation is a form of discussion where participants weigh the pros and cons of different approaches to solving complex problems. Participants work through various tradeoffs and consequences of actions with respect and passion, and, over time, they develop skills required for living in a democratic society: critical thinking, communication, judgment, and empathy.

Through participation in deliberation on challenging issues of the past, we hope students begin to comprehend history beyond timelines and multiple-choice questions. We believe deliberation fosters increased understanding of the decision-making process that built our nation’s past, and in doing so prepares young people for the problem solving that will create their shared future in our democracy. This classroom deliberation guide invites students to do just that by considering the difficult choices facing women seeking the right to vote in early 1915.

This issue guide on the Women’s Suffrage Movement in Alabama is a collaborative effort of the David Mathews Center for Civic Life and Alabama Public Television. Special thanks to colleagues at the Alabama Department of Archives and History, particularly Steve Murray and Alex Colvin.

In the following pages you will find supplementary material including a timeline and introductory essay intended to acquaint students with the history of women’s rights in the United States from the colonial era until 1915. Throughout the text appear underlined words. Their definitions can be found in the glossary on page 26. If your students already have background knowledge of the time period we welcome you to begin at “The Broader Context” on the bottom of page 16 and start the deliberative discussion!

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

1776

Abigail Adams' Letter

During the fight for America's independence, Abigail Adams wrote a letter to her husband Founding Father and future President John Adams emphasizing the importance of women in the future of the nation's political prosperity.

1840

Women's Suffrage Begins

Notable suffragists and abolitionists Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton are refused attendance to the World Anti-Slavery Convention due to their gender. This act of gatekeeping spurred the women to hold a women-only convention in the future.

1848

Seneca Falls Convention

Suffragists met publicly for the first time and signed a Declaration of Sentiments, which called for gender equality under the law and universal suffrage.

1848

National Women's Rights Convention

The first National Women's Rights Convention drew suffragists from all across the country to collectively state the goals of the gender equality movement and formally organize committees to accomplish them.

1870

Fifteenth Amendment

The 15th Amendment was ratified and prohibited the denial of a citizen's voting rights on the basis of race. Suffrage for women was not mentioned.

1868

Fourteenth Amendment

The 14th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution was ratified, officially granting citizenship and equal civil and legal rights to African American and formerly enslaved men.

1866

American Equal Rights Association

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony formed the American Equal Rights Association, which advocated for voting rights for all people regardless of gender and race.

1861-1865

The Civil War

The Civil War temporarily halted the women's suffrage movement. Undeterred, many suffragists continued to rally for abolition and pushed for the ratification of the 13th Amendment.

1870

Women's Christian Temperance Union

Annie Wittenmyer founded the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. WCTU sought cultural and moral reform through religion, temperance, and women's suffrage.

1875

Minor v. Happersett

After being turned away from registering to vote in Missouri, NWSA president Virginia Minor sued. In *Minor v. Happersett*, the Supreme Court ruled that the 14th Amendment does not inherently grant citizen's voting rights. The ruling upheld state legislation that denied women voting rights.

1878

Women's Suffrage Amendment

The Women's Suffrage Amendment was first introduced into Congress. Despite its initial rejection, its language largely comprises the document that became the 19th Amendment in 1920.

1884

Elk V. Wilkins

Former Winnebago tribe member John Elk was denied the right to vote. In *Elk v. Wilkins* the Supreme Court ruled that Elk was not an official U.S. citizen based on his identity at birth as a Winnebago tribe member and therefore unprotected by the 14th Amendment. This decision disenfranchised Native Americans well into the 20th century.

1890

NAWSA Forms

In May 1890, the National Women Suffrage Association and the American Women Suffrage Association, merge to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The organization works with its network of members to enact legislative change at the state level.

1878

Wyoming Grants Suffrage

In July 1878, the state of Wyoming was admitted to the Union as the first state to grant women's voting rights under its constitution.



A BRIEF TIMELINE OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

1894

Huntsville League for Women's Suffrage

Suffragist Virginia Clay-Clopton founded the Huntsville League for Woman Suffrage, the first pro-suffrage organization based in Alabama. The following year, she invited acclaimed suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt to speak on women's suffrage in Huntsville, further legitimizing the Alabama suffragist movement.



1896

National Association of Colored Women

Mary Church Terrell became the first president of the National Association of Colored Women, a women's rights organization made up of local black women's clubs. Displeased by the efforts of white suffragist organizations, NACW advocated for suffrage and general improvement of life for women of color in America.



1901

Alabama's 1901 Constitutional Convention

Alabama delegates met to rewrite the state constitution to formally disenfranchise African American citizens. Alabama suffragists urge legislators to write into the new Constitution the right of women to vote. Suffragist Frances Griffin gains an audience with the delegates, advocating for women's suffrage in a passionate address to the constitutional convention. However, 80% of the delegates vote against women's suffrage.



1910

Selma Carnegie Library Meeting

Alabama suffragist Mary Partridge organized a meeting at Selma's Carnegie Library to encourage support for the voting rights movement among Alabama women and potentially establish a state suffrage organization.

1911

National Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage

The anti-suffrage movement gained traction with the formation of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage led by Josephine Dodge. The primary arguments for anti-suffrage included an alignment with traditional home and family structures, a competition amongst genders rather than a unification, and an assertion of apathy amongst women regarding politics.



1912

Alabama Equal Suffrage Association

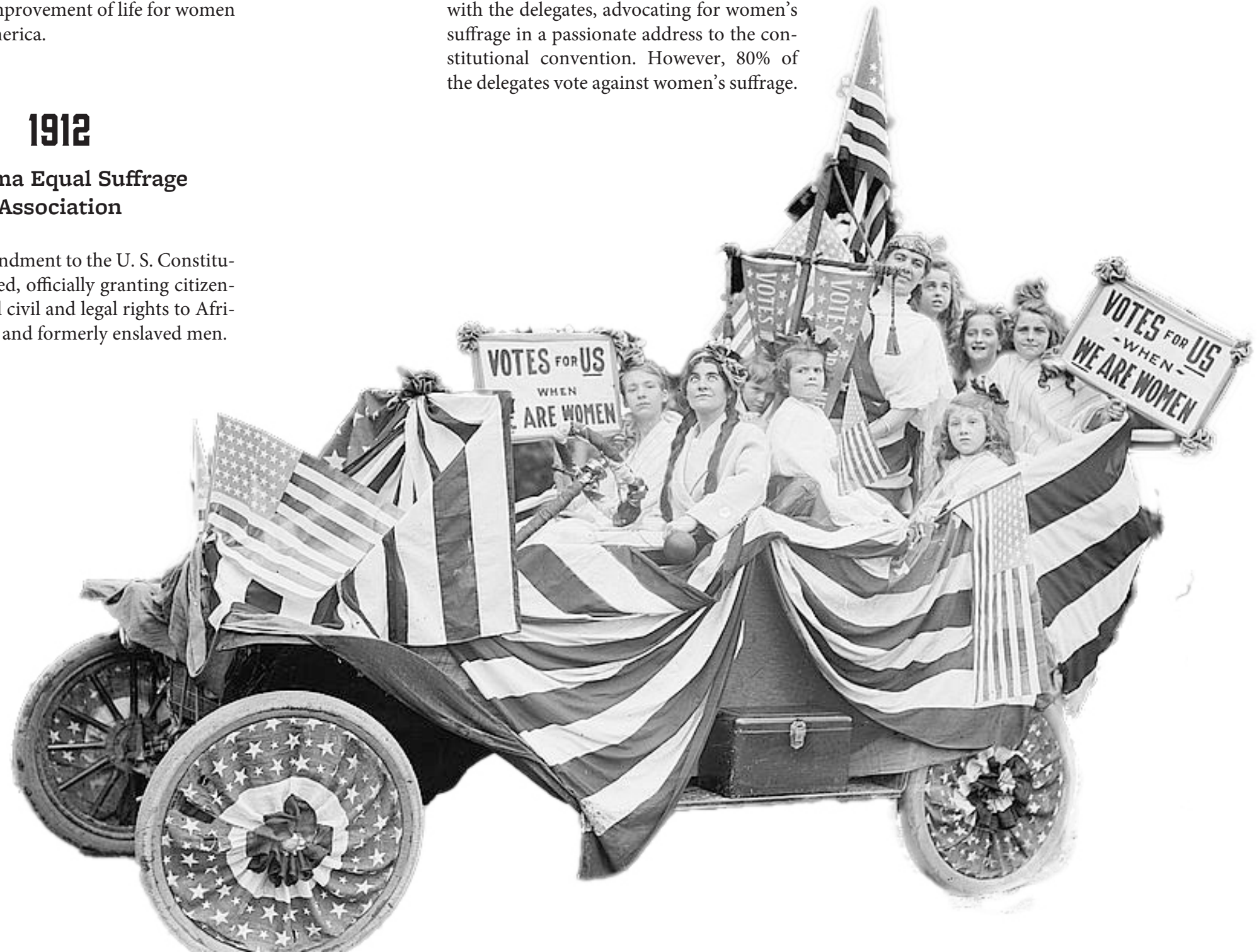
The 14th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution was ratified, officially granting citizenship and equal civil and legal rights to African American and formerly enslaved men.



1913

Women's Suffrage Parade

The first major public NAWSA demonstration, thousands of suffragists marched in a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C. Suffragists maximized national attention for their cause by strategically scheduling the march for the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration.



The Rights of Women in Early America



Image: Wikimedia Commons.

Before the American Revolution, women in colonial America had different rights depending upon where they lived. In colonies like New Jersey, the right to vote was connected to age, residence, and property. This meant that women and free people of color could legally vote. The only requirements to vote in colonial New Jersey were to be over 21, a resident of New Jersey for 12 months, and to have £50 worth of property. It is believed that about 10,000 women voted in New Jersey before 1807. In other colonies, like Massachusetts, New York, and Maryland, certain voting processes were open to any property owning person, including single women, widows, and free people of color who had inherited land or money.

Prior to the American Revolution, attendees of the **First Continental Congress (1776)** began discussing voting rights in America. Although women's suffrage was not a concept yet, women in America were considering how their new government would honor their role in society. Abigail Adams (left), the wife of founding father John Adams, asked her husband to "remember the ladies," while participating in the

First Continental Congress. Although women's suffrage was rarely discussed, many women in early America, including Abigail Adams, advocated that women have access to education and a place of influence in society.

*"... we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."
~ Abigail Adams ~*

Women in colonial America also played an active role in the Revolution. As keepers of the home and the purchasers of goods, women wielded economic power. Women who supported breaking away from British rule participated in the Patriot cause by boycotting British goods. By refusing to buy tea, sugar, paper and other taxed goods after the passage of the **Sugar Act (1764)**, the **Stamp Act (1765)**, and the **Tea Act (1773)** women demonstrated their support for the sentiment "no taxation without representation."

Other women supported the Revolutionary cause by supplying clothing and food for troops, taking care of businesses and farms while men were fighting, and even acting as spies. One such woman was Lydia Darragh, who recorded the activities of nearby British troops. When British troops were quartered in her home she overheard them planning a surprise attack on Washington's army and passed the information along to an American soldier, foiling the attack.

Despite their limited rights in colonial America, through civic action and service, women played an influential role in establishing American democracy.



Depiction of the "Edenton Tea Party," where women in Edenton, North Carolina signed an agreement to boycott tea. Image: Library of Congress.

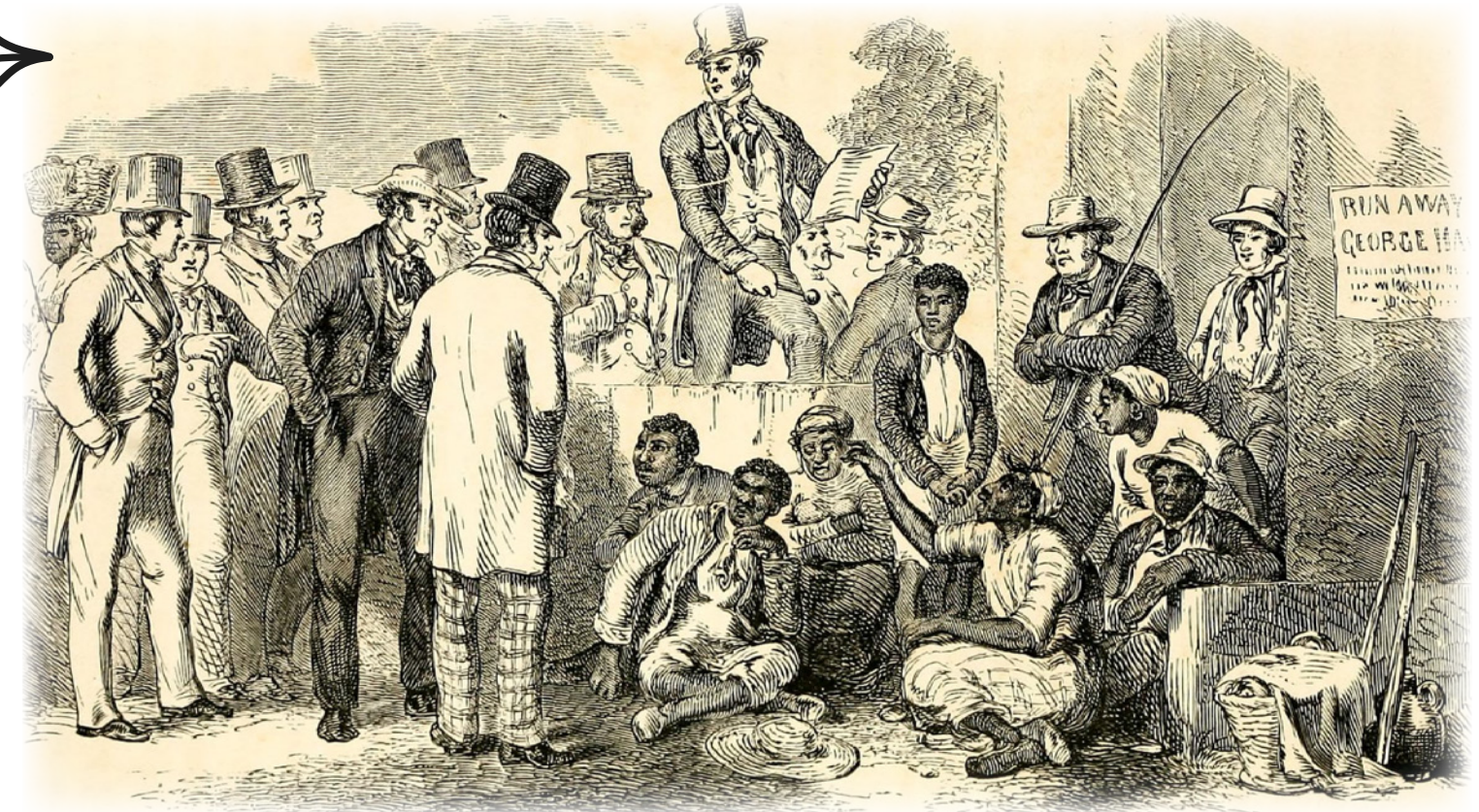
Female Writers in the 18th & 19th Century

For most of human history, few people were literate. Even fewer women than men could read. One estimate is that in the 16th and 17th century only 1 in 10 British women could read or write. However, within the next one hundred years, literacy rates improved for women. It is believed that by the time of the **American Revolution (1776-1783)** about half of the women in the colonies could read or write to some extent. By the time the first census was taken in New England in 1850 nearly all adults, male and female, were literate. It is no surprise then that more and more women began publishing their writing during this time! Some famous women writers during this period include Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792)*. This essay argued that women should receive a rigorous education that taught them to be rational, virtuous, capable thinkers. She argued that it is especially important for women to be educated since they will pass their knowledge along to their children. She also argued that educated women can better contribute to society. Her writing and advocacy for female education paved the way for many influential women of the 19th century.



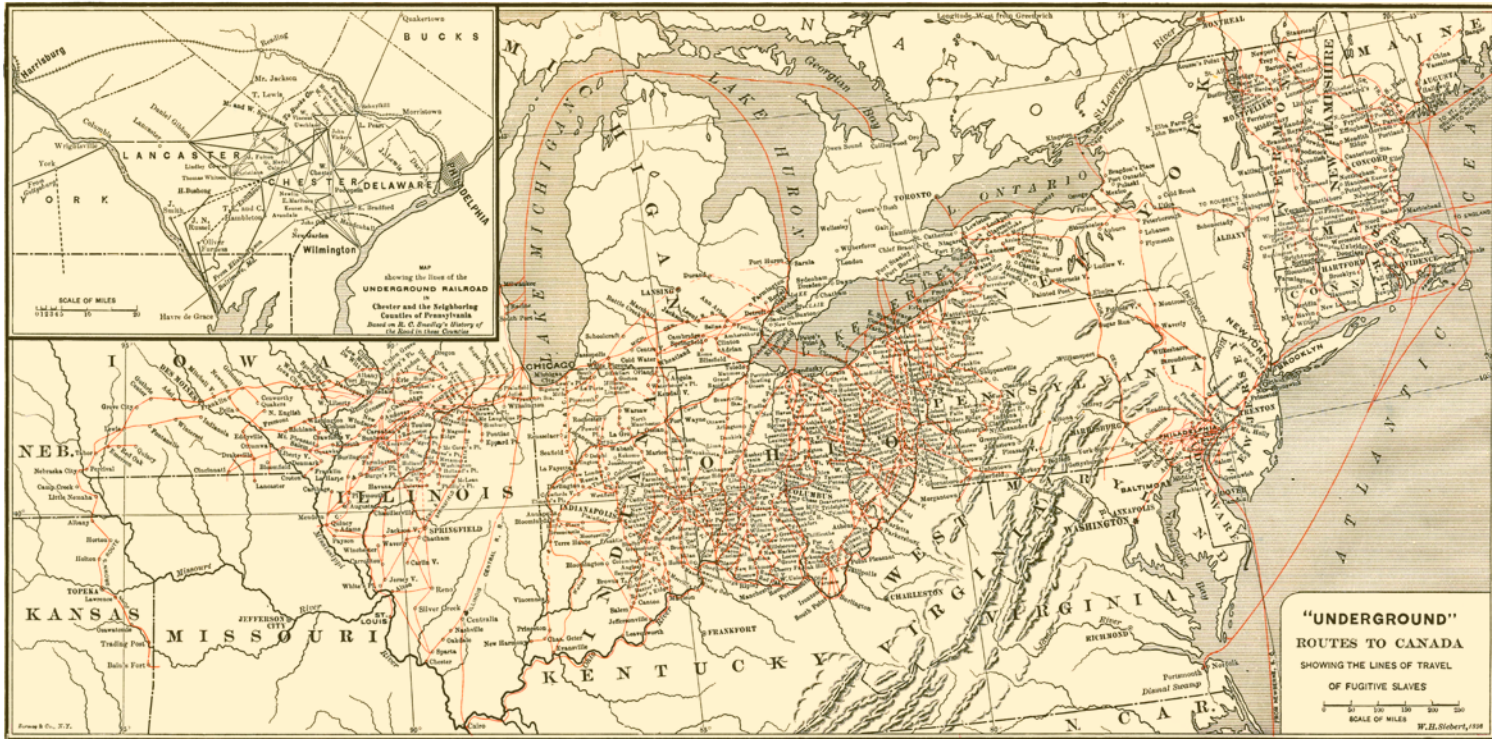
Mary Wollstonecraft. Image: John Opie via Wikimedia Commons



"The Auction Block," an illustration from an 1852 edition of Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Image: Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection.

Harriet Beecher Stowe is one example of the way that literate, educated females were able to contribute to society in influential ways. Stowe's abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852)* told the story of Tom, a slave, who ultimately dies at the hands of his master. The book is considered one of the most influential abolitionist texts ever written and was the best-selling book of the 19th century.

THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT AND WOMEN



A map depiction of the routes that “fugitive” slaves took during their escape to free states and Canada. These routes became known as the “Underground Railroad.” Image: “The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom: A Comprehensive History” by Wilbur Henry Siebert (1898).

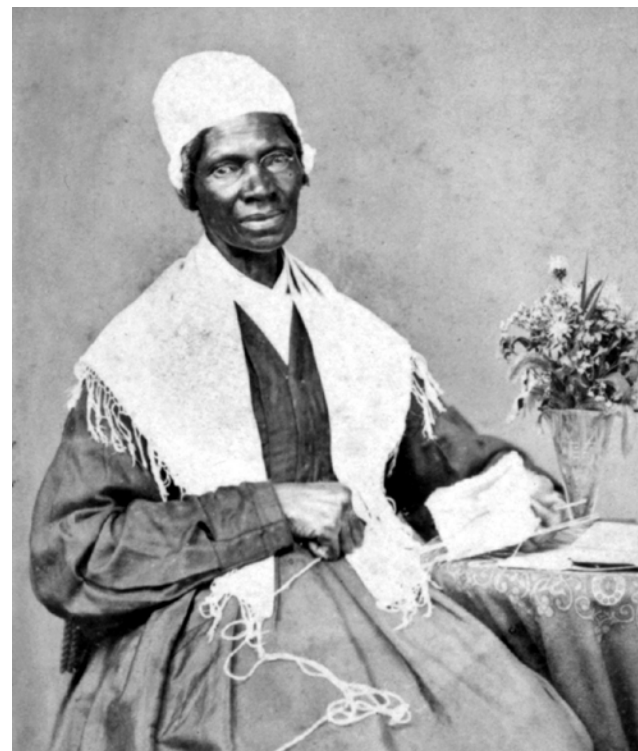
Harriet Beecher Stowe was not the only woman advocating for an end to slavery. The abolitionist movement was one of the first political movements American women were involved in, including many women who were formerly enslaved such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. While women were still barred from speaking at many antislavery conventions, many thousands were involved in the abolitionist movement. They organized meetings, authored anti-slavery pamphlets, and assisted slaves escaping on the Underground Railroad.

The women’s suffrage movement emerged from the abolitionist movement. Many women abolitionists favored universal suffrage for all people: black or white, male or female. Women abolitionists also knew that if they were given the right to vote they would have more political power in the fight against slavery.

While women couldn’t fight in the Civil War or cast a ballot, they did influence the passage of the 13th amendment. In 1864 the National Women’s Loyal League, an organization lead by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, gathered over 400,000 signatures on a petition to end slavery.

In 1865 the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery was ratified. The 14th Amendment, providing birthright citizenship, followed in 1868 and in 1870 the 15th amendment was ratified. To many antislavery suffragists the 13th amendment and 14th amendment were a success. However, the 15th amendment, left many antislavery suffragists frustrated. This amendment reads:

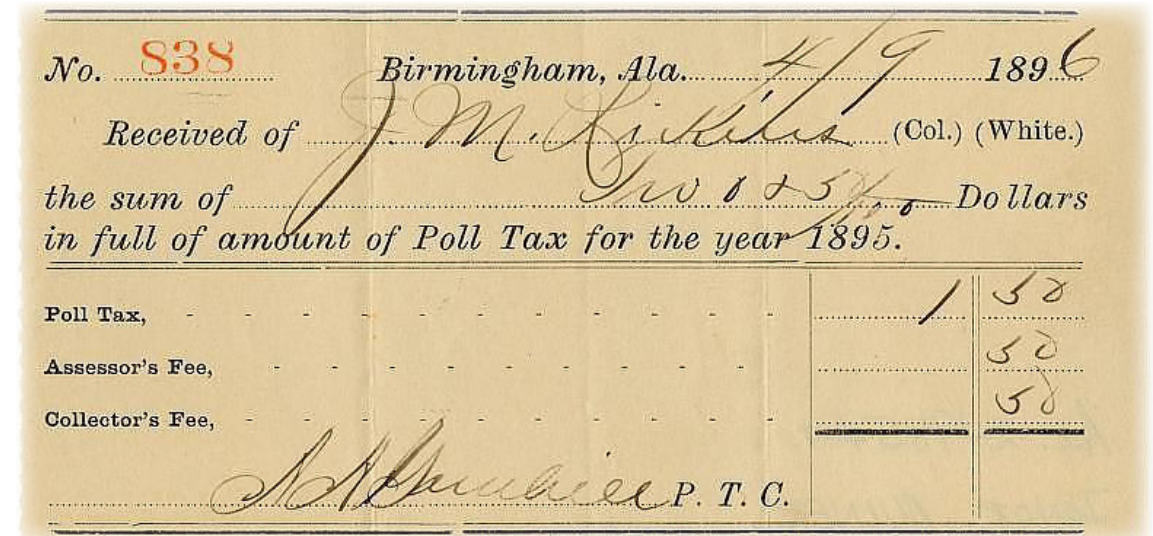
“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”



Sojourner Truth, after escaping to freedom, spent her life advocating for an end to slavery and women’s suffrage. Image: Wikimedia Commons

While the 15th amendment prevented citizens from being denied their rights because of race, it didn’t prevent citizens from being denied their rights because of their sex. Because of this women were still not granted the full rights of citizens. Women still could not vote, own property, or serve on juries. Many states also denied parental rights to mothers.

To complicate matters further, states in the Reconstruction South created new ways to discriminate against freed black men. In reaction to the 15th amendment, Jim Crow laws were created and new legal requirements were put in place to prevent freedmen from voting. These laws require that voters pass complicated literacy tests, pay poll taxes, and possess property in order to vote. As a result, few black men or poor white men could vote.



A poll tax receipt from Birmingham, Alabama circa 1896. Poll taxes were one method used to prevent freedmen from voting. Many low income white men also could not afford to pay the poll tax and therefore did not vote. The fees and taxes of \$2.50 would be equivalent to \$79.54 in today’s dollars. Image: Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

THE SENECA FALLS CONVENTION

On **July 19, 1848**, in Seneca Falls, New York, over 200 women from across the country gathered to discuss issues that were affecting them. The conference was organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who had met at an abolitionist conference almost 10 years earlier. After being barred from speaking at the abolitionist conference because they were women, Mott and Stanton were inspired to begin organizing for women’s rights.

The original advertisement for the Seneca Falls Convention invited women to “a convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women.” On the first day of the Seneca Falls Convention the “Declaration of Sentiments and Grievances” was read. On the second day of the convention men, including Frederick Douglass, were invited to the convention to hear the concerns and arguments of the women. On this second day the women not only adopted and signed the *Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions*, they voted for 12 resolutions regarding the rights of women. Eleven of these resolutions passed unanimously but one resolution was met with much disagreement: a resolution to secure for women the right to vote.

“it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise”
- Seneca Falls Declarations of Sentiments & Resolutions -

Following the Seneca Falls Convention, women’s suffrage conventions became annual events, and pro-suffrage organizations spread across the country.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (left) and Susan B. Anthony (right) were both abolitionists and founding members of the women’s suffrage movement. Image: Wikimedia Common

THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT COMES SOUTH



Image: Henry Mayer / The Library of Congress

An illustration titled "The Awakening" published in Puck Magazine in February 1915. The image depicts Lady Liberty walking from Western states where 4 million women had already gained suffrage, toward the southern, midwest, and eastern states, where women were still fighting for suffrage.

In the late 1800's two major women's suffrage organizations were founded: the American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman Suffrage Association. In 1890 these two organizations merged into the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). The organization encouraged local chapters to be founded in cities and towns across the Reconstruction South, including in Alabama. Because the Civil War and resulting Reconstruction caused tension between the federal and state governments, suffrage was an especially complicated issue in Alabama.

The first women's suffrage organization in Alabama emerged in 1892 in Decatur, Alabama and in 1894 Virginia Clay-Clopton founded the Huntsville Women's Suffrage Association. These organizations originally petitioned for an amendment to the state constitution. During the creation of **Alabama's 1901 Constitution**, members of local suffrage organizations urged the state legislature to write into the new constitution the right of women to vote. Unfortunately, 80% of the delegates voted against including voting rights for women.

THE OPPOSITION

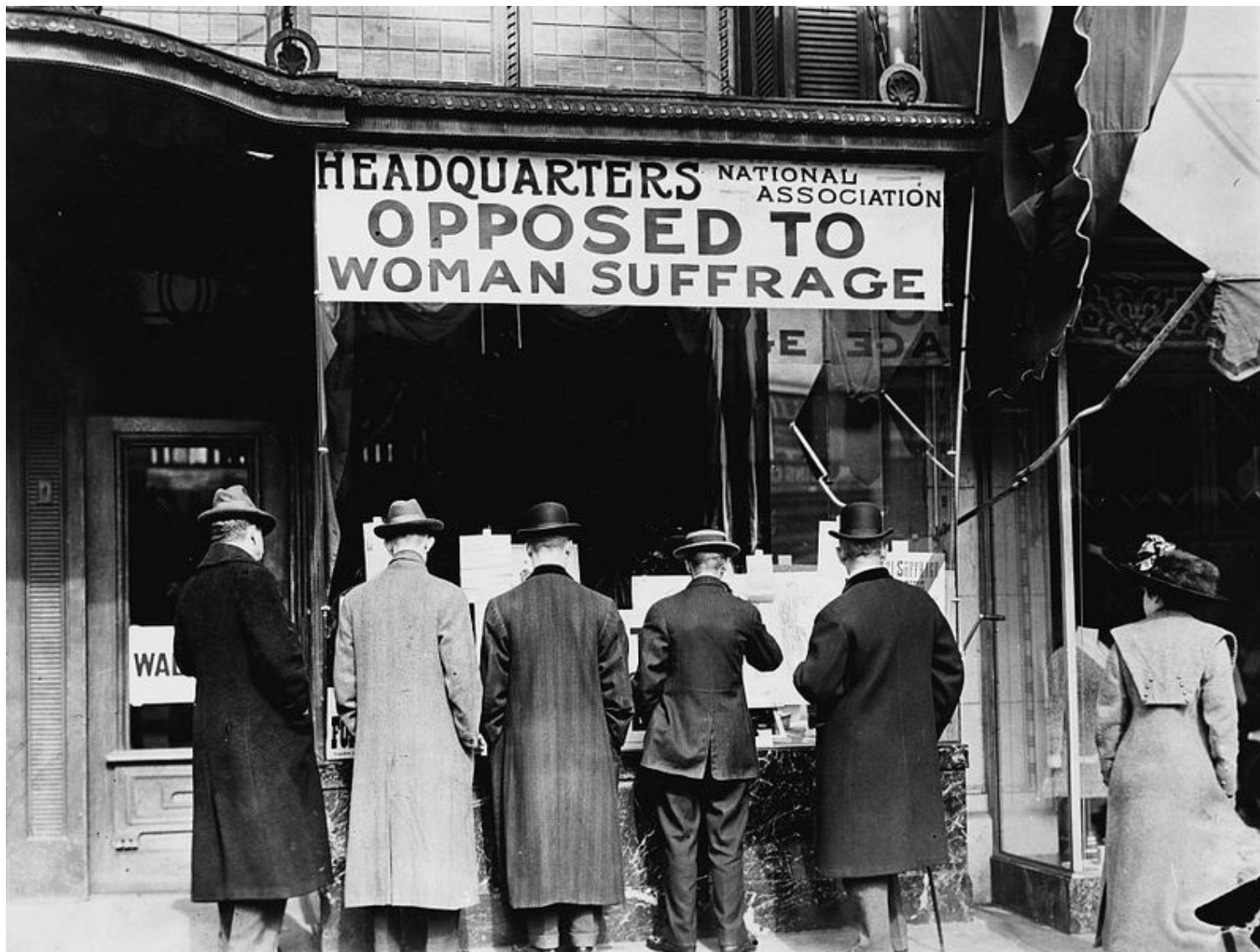


Photo taken in front of the Washington, D.C. office of the National Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage. Image : The Library of Congress

Women's suffrage was not only unpopular with many state legislators. It was also unpopular with much of the public, including some women. Opposition organizations formed including the Alabama Male Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage, the Alabama Woman's Anti-Ratification League and the Southern Woman's League for Rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. These organizations focused their efforts on preventing the ratification of state and federal amendments.

ACTIVITY:

Examine the arguments against women's suffrage in the two following primary source documents. What are some of the reasons these organizations give for opposing women's suffrage? How are their arguments similar? How are they different? Have you seen people use similar arguments during other periods of history?

"America When Feminized," published by the Southern Women's League for the Rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. Available from the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

<http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/singleitem/collection/voices/id/12707/rec/12>

Letter from the Alabama Male Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage. Available from the National Archives at

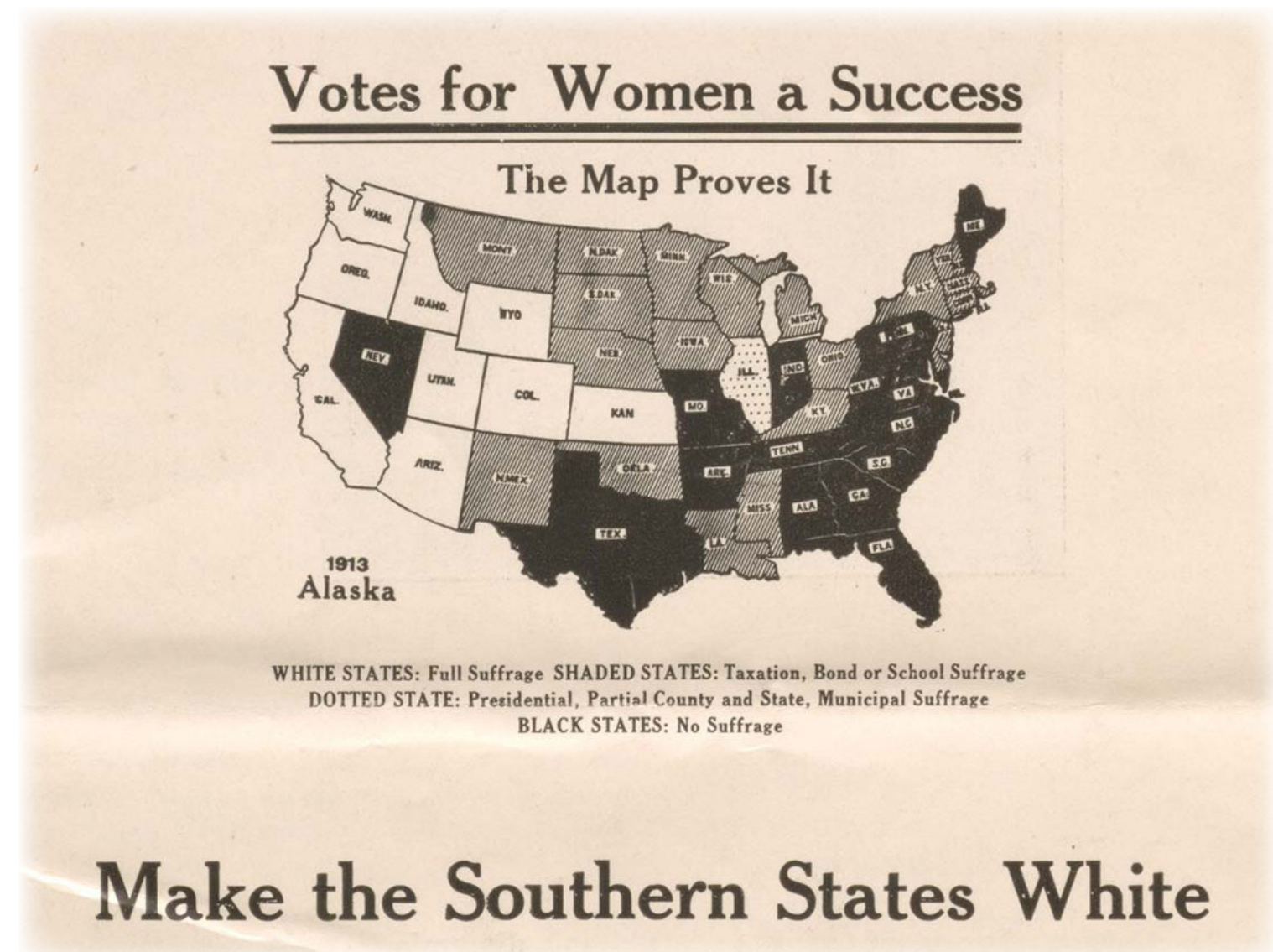
<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/74884173>

RACISM AND THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

The resistance of states like Alabama to add women's suffrage amendments to their constitutions was one factor that influenced the founding of the Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage. Founded in 1912 by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, the Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage focused solely on passing a federal constitutional amendment.

However, disagreement about whether to fight for voting rights on a state or federal level was motivated by more than practicality. While a growing number of women in the south and in Alabama were petitioning for women to gain the right to vote, many were specific that they only wanted white women to gain voting rights.

Racially motivated organizations were created such as the Southern States Woman's Suffrage Conference (SSWSC), founded in 1913. The SSWSC's motto was direct: "Make the Southern States White." Other suffrage organizations around the south, including in Alabama, argued that federal amendments would do no harm, since Jim Crow laws would prevent women of color from voting anyway.



From the October 1914 cover of the *New Southern Citizen*, a publication of the Southern State's Women's Suffrage Conference. Image : The Library of Congress

Even within the women's suffrage movement racism flourished. Two of the most well known abolitionists turned suffragists, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, resisted the enfranchisement of black voters. Susan B. Anthony famously stated, "I would rather cut off this right arm of mine before I will ever work for or demand the ballot for the negro and not the woman." Additionally, local suffrage associations often barred women of color from being members. Not only were women of color barred from the 1901 and 1903 National American Women's Suffrage Association Conventions, in 1911 the organization's president refused to publicly denounce white supremacy.

BLACK WOMEN AND THE BALLOT

As a result of white suffragists excluding black women from suffrage organizations, women of color began to organize their own suffrage associations. Not only were women of color advocating for the vote for themselves, they were also advocating for men of color, whose voting rights were being violated by poll taxes, literacy tests, and other discriminatory practices.

Despite the barriers before them, women of color across Alabama played influential roles in the women's suffrage movement. One such example is Margaret Murray Washington, the wife of Booker T. Washington, who founded the Tuskegee Institute. Margaret Murray Washington was influential on the local level, founding the local Tuskegee Women's Club, as well as co-founding the National Association of Colored Women (NACW).

While the NACW had many objectives, one of its goals was achieving universal women's suffrage. Their motto of "Lifting As We Climb" hoped to convey to "an ignorant and suspicious world that our aims and interests are identical with those of all good aspiring women." Beyond the fight for the ballot, the NACW, which later became known as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs advocated for job training and fair wages, in addition to raising scholarship funds for black women.



Image: Wikimedia Commons



Young women on the steps of Atlanta University around 1899. Raising scholarship funds for black women to receive higher education was one of the many objectives of the National Association of Colored Women beyond women's suffrage. Image: Thomas E Askew / Library of Congress

SUFFRAGE, CITIZENSHIP, AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



A depiction of Queen Alliquippa, a highly regarded 18th century Seneca leader. The Seneca, members of the Iroquois nation, honored men and women in tribal decisions. The tribe and its women served as inspiration for the founders and attendees of the Seneca Falls Convention. Image: Thomas E Askew / Library of Congress

Despite the fact that Native Americans were not recognized citizens, Iroquois women provided inspiration to suffragists. The six Iroquois nations — the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk and Tuscarora — acknowledged women in tribal leadership and decision making. In fact, the Seneca Nation's constitution demanded that the "mothers of the nation" had to approve any treaty with three-fourths majority. Lucretia Mott, one of the co-founders of the aptly named Seneca Falls Convention, cited the egalitarian democratic structure of the Seneca tribe as a model for women's suffrage.

Indigenous women (and men) also had broader challenges to contend with when it came to suffrage: they still were not recognized as US citizens. During the **Indian Removal of the 1830s** tribes from across the United States were forced off their land. These tribes included the Creeks who had lived in modern day Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. After being forcibly removed and emigrating on the Trail of Tears, most Creek people were resettled to the Oklahoma Territory.

After the ratification of the 14th amendment, many legal cases were argued regarding the recognition of indigenous people as natural born U.S. citizens, including *Elk v. Wilkins*. Ultimately, the courts ruled that the rights granted by the 14th amendment did not extend to native peoples. Even though American Indians were born within U.S. borders, the courts didn't believe they should be recognized as U.S. citizens because tribal settlements were untaxed and considered independent nations. As a result, they were considered U.S. nationals, not citizens, and were required to go through a naturalization process to gain citizenship.

Despite the fact that Native Americans were not recognized citizens, Iroquois women provided inspiration to suffragists. The six Iroquois nations — the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk and Tuscarora — acknowledged women in tribal leadership and decision making. In fact, the Seneca Nation's constitution demanded that the "mothers of the nation" had to approve any treaty with three-fourths majority. Lucretia Mott, one of the co-founders of the aptly named Seneca Falls Convention, cited the egalitarian democratic structure of the Seneca tribe as a model for women's suffrage.

THE BROADER CONTEXT

Imagine yourself in the year 1915. It has been 128 years since the Constitution was signed. The United States has expanded, changed, and grown in the years since. People from all different backgrounds - immigrants, freed people, American Indians - have all been working to gain recognition and representation in government. Among those who are fighting for greater representation and voting rights are "suffragists."

These women (and men), from many different backgrounds and from all over the country are asking, "what is the best way for us to fight for our right to vote?" Some believe the first step is changing the way society thinks about women. Others believe we cannot wait for men, and even other women, to change their perception. They argue that we must fight for legal change now - either at the federal or state level.

In the following pages you'll find a framework for a deliberation. During a deliberative discussion, you are asked to put yourself in the shoes of someone making a historical decision. You are asked to consider each of the options, the benefits and the tradeoffs, and make a choice.

Imagine you are a young person living in Alabama in 1915. You want to be a part of the women's suffrage movement, but you haven't decided how yet. Organizations from across the country and state are advocating for their approach and asking you to join their organization. In the following pages you will have a chance to examine their arguments for yourself: What are the benefits? What are the trade-offs? What direction, ultimately, do you think we should choose?

APPROACH ONE:

Focus on Changing Public Perception

Many suffrage organizations are focused on forcing legal change upon legislatures and courts. But these systems are run by men, and as long as these men and the constituents they represent reject the idea of women’s suffrage these amendments will not pass. **Rather than simply demanding changes in the law, we should focus on changing the minds of those most opposed to granting women voting rights.** Besides, even if we are successful at passing legislation on women’s suffrage, if we don’t change people’s perception of women and the good that women voters can accomplish, nothing will change. Women will continue to face voter suppression and discrimination at the local level as we’ve seen happen to African American men with Jim Crow laws. Organizations like the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) believe that we should work, through civic clubs and church organizations, to convince the public that giving women voting rights will have a positive impact on society. **We should dedicate our time to persuading the public that women voters will keep the country morally accountable through their advocacy for family welfare issues including child labor, the protection of women and girls, and rising rates of alcoholism.**



Left: Julia Strudwick Tutwiler / Image : Birmingham Public Library Archives
 Above: Students at the Alabama Normal College where Julia Strudwick Tutwiler acted as administrator. The college was the state’s first publicly funded higher education institution for women. At the college, female students trained to be educators before fulfilling a two year commitment as teachers at public schools. Image: Alabama Department of Archives and History.

BENEFITS

By speaking to and promoting the positive effects of suffrage to clubs and churches, we can not only reach people easily, we can appeal to the traditional values of the masses.



In America, women are responsible for the welfare of the family. Women voters will vote for politicians and policies that will protect their families from crime, drunkenness, and other bad behavior. **Society will support women’s suffrage if we persuade them that a vote for women is a vote for high moral standards.**



Popular tactics such as picketing, pageants, and protests are viewed as improper. **By using more peaceful and feminine ways to convey our message, such as silent-protests and prayer, our message will be more acceptable to the public.**



TRADEOFFS

Many denominations and churches remain divided regarding the questions of women’s suffrage. And, since few women hold leadership positions within places of worship, women will have few opportunities to address and persuade attendees anyway.

People have very different ideas of “morality” and “right and wrong.” **Arguing that women voters would create a more “moral” society may actually cause divisions and be offensive to men.** Also, if voting women use their power to impose Christian values upon the public, it could threaten the separation of church and state.

Despite using “peaceful” or “feminine” means to demonstrate, many still see the agenda of organizations like the Women’s Christian Temperance Union as extreme. Besides, if seeing women picket or protest makes others uncomfortable, that’s their problem. **We shouldn’t have to sacrifice our right to free speech to make others comfortable.**

PROFILE:

The Women’s Home Union

The national Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) began in 1874 with 16 states represented at the national convention. However, the movement quickly spread across the United States and in 1882 the first local chapter was started in Alabama. In 1883 Tuscaloosa women, including Elen Peter Bryce and Julia Tutwiler, started a local chapter called the “Women’s Home Union.” Both Elen Peter Bryce and Julia Strudwick Tutwiler became influential female leaders in the state during their lifetime.

Elen Peter Bryce’s husband was the superintendent of one of the first institutions for the mentally ill, later renamed “Bryce Hospital.” She was extensively involved in the local community, belonging to over 30 clubs and organizations. After her death, her home was converted into the first kindergarten in Tuscaloosa.

Julia Strudwick Tutwiler was a lifelong advocate for education reform, particularly greater access to higher education for women. She lobbied the legislature for the creation of a number of women’s colleges in Alabama and served as an administrator at Alabama women’s colleges. Thanks in part to her effort, the Alabama Girls Industrial School, now the University of Montevallo, was opened in 1896. However, Tutwiler didn’t stop there. Through her hard work and lobbying women gained admission to the University of Alabama. She was also a lifelong advocate for prison reform and served as the Alabama WCTU’s state chairman of prison and jail work.

While Julia Tutwiler did not live to see the 19th Amendment passed, she and Elen Peter Bryce embody the values of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, which emphasized the “moralizing” force of women. The WCTU advocated that by letting women in the voting booth, America would become a more honorable, peaceful, and ethical society.

APPROACH TWO:

Focus on Gaining Suffrage at the State Level

Since the early 1910's, women's suffrage clubs have been formed across Alabama. The Alabama Equal Suffrage Association, an off-shoot of the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA), was formed in 1911 under the leadership of Patti Ruffner Jacobs of Birmingham, Alabama. Within a few years, local women's suffrage organizations have sprung up in cities and towns across the state, like the Vinemont Equal Suffrage Association in Cullman and the Coal City Equal Suffrage Association in St. Clair County. The Alabama Equal Suffrage Association believes that the best way to gain the vote for women is to fight for women's enfranchisement at the state level. Many western states and territories have already passed legislation giving women the right to vote. Some states have even written women's suffrage into their constitution! Territories like Wyoming have not only allowed women to vote since 1890, they have also given women the right to retain personal property after marriage, required equal pay for male and female teachers, and allowed women to serve on juries. **We should work through organizations like the Alabama Equal Suffrage Association to achieve equality by advocating for an amendment to the state constitution.**

BENEFITS

Suffrage supporters in Western states and have had great success gaining the right to vote at the state level — much more success than those fighting for a federal amendment. **Starting at the state level is a smaller task. It allows us to be more persuasive by localizing our arguments in favor of suffrage.** Also, if enough people change state laws, perhaps federal change will follow.



By working at the state level, we are respecting Alabama's long legacy of "states' rights," which will be more appealing to our elected leaders. Politicians would be more receptive to suffrage if we go through the state than if we go over their heads to change voting rights at the federal level.



Many national organizations have other issues on their agenda besides suffrage, such as enforcing child labor and food safety laws, and protecting the property rights of women. **Not all of these policies are popular with local women's suffrage supporters - some are downright unpopular.**



TRADEOFFS

Women's suffrage simply is not popular in Alabama in the same way it is in Western states. Alabama even had the opportunity to give women voting rights in the 1901 Constitution, but 80% of the convention voted against it. **We shouldn't waste time fighting at the state level, since we probably won't be successful.**

We should not try to appeal to the legacy of "states' rights," which was Alabama's reason for seceding from the Union and continuing to deny personhood to slaves. There are already women in the suffrage movement who are fighting for only white women's right to vote. **By appealing to "states' rights" we are continuing to support a political philosophy that has been used to perpetuate slavery and discrimination.**

Despite the fact that not all of these policies are popular with local suffrage supporters, many of them, such as enforcing food safety laws, will only be successful if passed and enforced at the federal level.



The office of the Alabama Equal Suffrage Association. Mary Munson's Vinemont Equal Suffrage Association was one example of the many local clubs within the Alabama Equal Suffrage Association network. *Image: Alabama Department of Archives and History.*

PROFILE:

Mary Munson

Mary Munson was born in Indiana in 1848. She didn't marry until age 42, shortly after she moved to Illinois, where she met her husband-to-be Charles Munson, President of the Munson Belt Manufacturing Company. Sadly, in 1891 just a couple years after their marriage, Charles died, followed shortly after by the death of his eldest daughter. Mary, now the sole provider for herself and Charles's three living children, made the decision to sell her stake in her husband's company and move to Alabama in 1898. There she settled in Cullman County, purchasing Ridge Farm just outside of Vinemont. Mary Munson not only became the operator of a successful farm, but an influential community member. In August 1913, Miss Munson hosted the inaugural meeting of the Vinemont Equal Suffrage Association at Ridge Farms. Munson was elected as president of this local club which networked with other clubs around the state including the Alabama Equal Suffrage Association. The Vinemont Equal Suffrage Association, like many Alabama suffrage organizations, advocated for changing the laws at the state level.

APPROACH THREE:

Focus on Gaining Suffrage at the Federal Level

Public opinion, laws, and government structure vary too much throughout the country to rely on change to happen at the state level. Instead, we should invest our time, money, and efforts on creating change at the federal level. Through tactics such as lobbying, petitioning, and protests we can create publicity and influence change. Large national organizations that fight for the rights and concerns of women are also the most efficient. They have attracted the most funding and a large number of high-profile endorsements. Through organizations in Washington, D.C. like the Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage and the National American Women's Suffrage Association, our time and resources will have the greatest impact and our campaign will be most likely to succeed.

BENEFITS

The issue of women's suffrage is not just a question of representation, but a question of citizenship and personhood. The only appropriate place to address that question is at the federal level. **To choose to work on the state level is to compromise on the principle of suffrage: that women should be fully recognized as people by their country and its Constitution.**



If we leave the issue of suffrage up to the states, many women (especially Southern women and women of color) may never get the right to vote. **We must focus on passing a Constitutional amendment at the federal level since suffrage may never be popular enough to gain support at the state level in many places.**



Passing a federal amendment is the only way to ensure *all women*, in current and future states, will gain the right to vote. This is especially true in the South, where some suffrage organizations are petitioning specifically for white women to gain the right to vote at the exclusion of women of color.

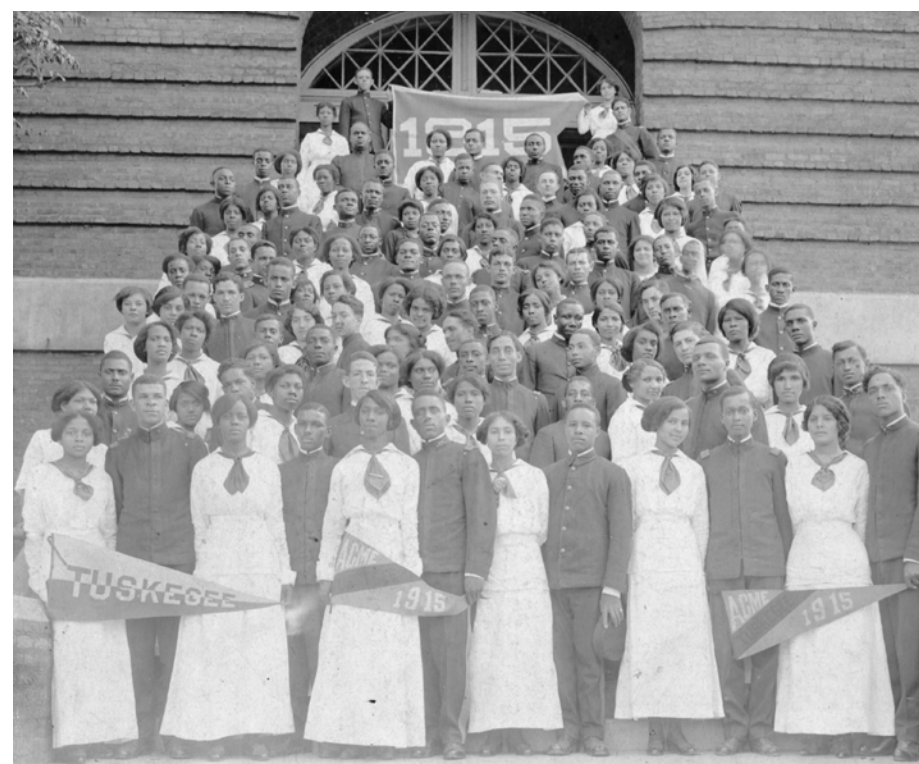


TRADEOFFS

Amending the Constitution is a long, difficult process and would require overwhelming support by Congress. Two-thirds of the Senate would need to support the amendment which is unlikely when many represent areas of the country where suffrage is not popular with their constituents.

Even if a Constitutional amendment granting women suffrage passes Congress, it still must be ratified by 36 states. **If many states, especially Southern states, won't pass an amendment at the state level, there is little reason to believe they will ratify an amendment to the US Constitution handed down to them by the federal government.**

While seeking suffrage at the federal level for all women, regardless of race, is noble it doesn't mean the right will be respected at the local level. States like Alabama already have unjust systems in place, like poll taxes and literacy tests, that prevent men of color from voting. If the federal government hasn't been able to enforce the rights of free black men to vote in Alabama, why would we think it would be any different for women, especially women of color?



PROFILE:

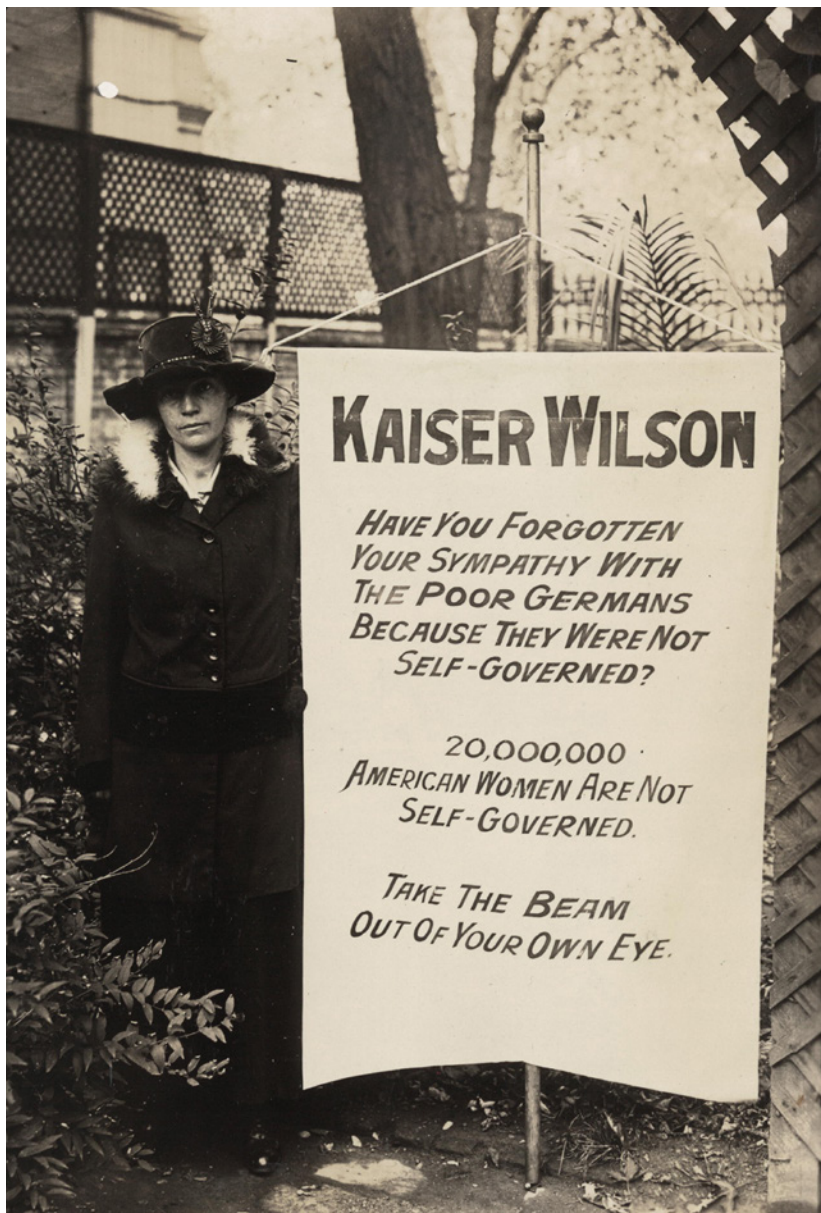
Adella Hunt Logan

Adella Hunt Logan was born in Sparta, Georgia in 1863, the daughter of a free woman of African-American, Cherokee, and white descent and a white plantation owner. Logan achieved a level of education practically unheard of for women of the time, especially women of color. She graduated from Bass Academy, where she studied to be an educator, before attending Atlanta University and Upper Normal College in Georgia. After graduation she accepted a teaching position at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. There she met and married a fellow academic, Warren Logan, with whom she had six children.

One of Hunt Logan's primary goals was achieving universal suffrage. As a white-passing woman she was an active member of the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA), participating in regional and national conferences that many women of color could not gain access to due to Jim Crow laws. At these meetings Adella Hunt Logan advocated for suffrage for all women and all people of color. This was not popular with all suffrage supporters. Many white suffragists in Alabama were specifically advocating for only white women to gain the right to vote. They argued that if white women gained the vote their ballots would outweigh the votes of freedmen.

Despite racism and opposition, Adella Hunt Logan was an outspoken advocate of universal suffrage throughout her life. At the time of her death, Hunt Logan was a notable suffragist and widely published, including in the NAWSA's *The Woman's Journals* and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's *The Crisis* newsletter.

Top: Adella Hunt Logan / Image: Wikimedia Commons
Left: 1915 graduates pose for a picture at Tuskegee University where Adella Hunt Logan and her husband Warren Logan served as faculty / Image: Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum



Above: Virginia Arnold of the National Woman's Party holds a banner expressing criticism of President Woodrow Wilson. Wilson argued for the need for democratic rule in the new Weimar Republic while still opposing suffrage for women in the U.S.

Image: Library of Congress.

ensure equal suffrage for women, especially in the South where racism prevailed. Afraid that women's suffrage would result in greater voting access for people of color, not a single Southern state had passed a suffrage amendment. The National Woman's Party (an off-shoot of the Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage) founded in **1916** by Alice Paul, bolstered the effort to pass a federal amendment. The organization, which staged regular demonstrations in Washington, D.C. was uniquely dedicated to the passage of a federal amendment for women's suffrage.

In his **September 1918** address to Congress, President Wilson urged the legislative branch to take action on women's suffrage at a federal level. "I regard the concurrence of the Senate in the constitutional amendment proposing the extension of the suffrage to women as vitally essential to the successful prosecution of the great war of humanity in which we are engaged," persuaded President Wilson. Following the compelling address of the President, on **June 4th, 1919**, Congress passed the 19th amendment:

"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."

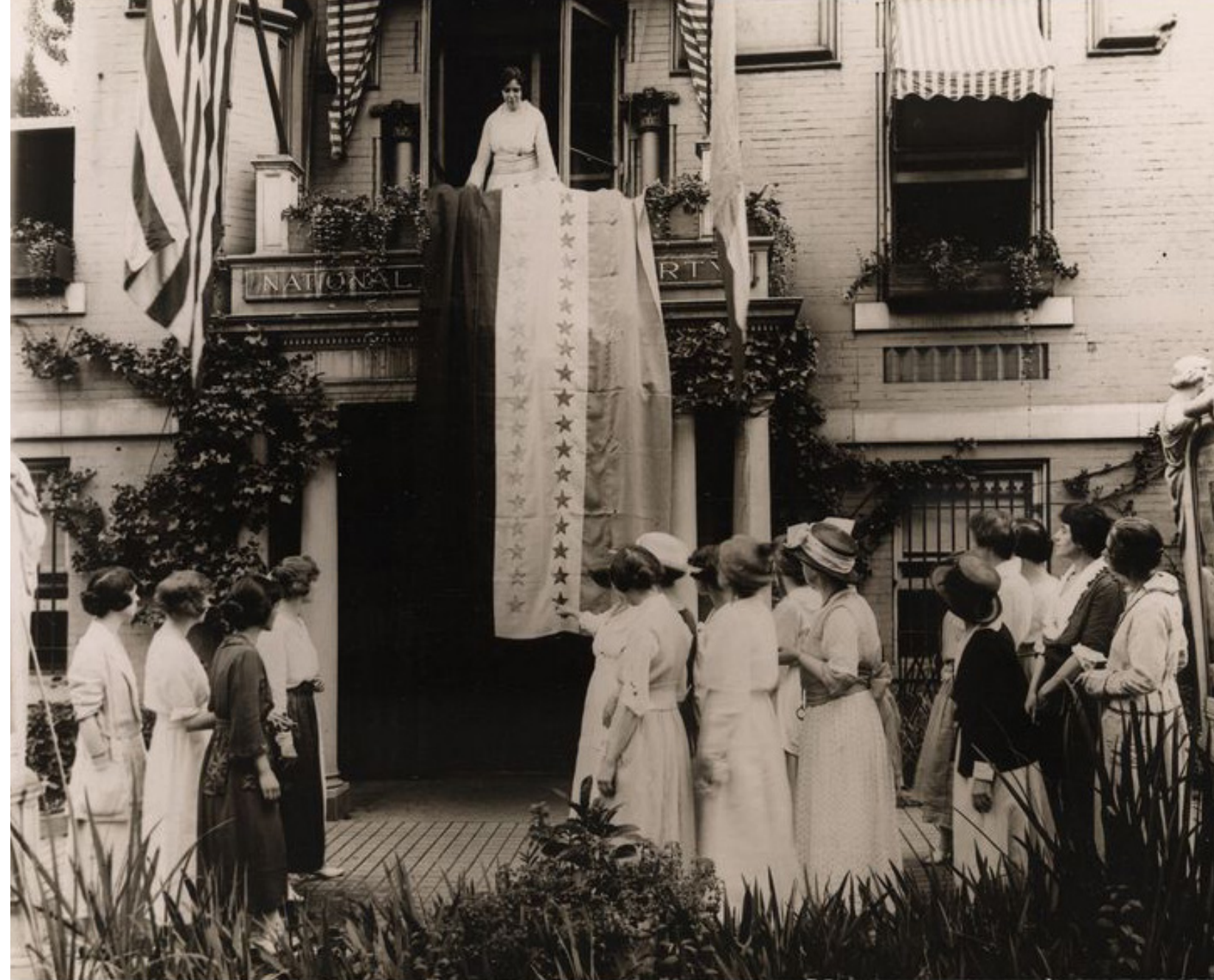
Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th amendment on **August 18, 1920** and women's suffrage was official.

AFTERWORD: The Long Road to Suffrage

In **September 1918**, after nearly 80 years of suffragist efforts, President Woodrow Wilson, who had once opposed suffrage, asked Congress to reconsider granting women the right to vote. President Wilson argued, "We have made partners of the women in this war; shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right?"

President Wilson was not alone in his reconsideration of women's suffrage in the face of the Great War. Women were an integral part of the war effort — managing business on the homefront, serving as nurses and even joining the armed forces. Not only did the service of these women during the war highlight their capabilities, but it also highlighted the massive inequality affecting American democracy. To many Americans, it seemed hypocritical for the United States to be waging war abroad to defend democracy, while not granting equal voting rights to all citizens of the United States. Meanwhile, British women had been granted voting rights in **February 1918**.

Furthermore, the movement to pass equal rights amendments on the state level was losing steam. Only 8 states had amended their constitutions to include women's suffrage. It was becoming clear that a federal amendment would be required to



Above: Alice Paul, at the National Woman's Party headquarters in Washington, D.C. unfurls the ratification flag with all 36 stars. Women's suffrage passed in 1920 when Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th amendment. Image: *The Woman's Hour* by Elaine Weiss

Despite the passage of the 19th amendment, the same type of restrictions that had been used to prevent men of color from voting were used against many women. In Alabama, Mary Lou Graves was one such woman that ran into these barriers. In **1921** Graves tried to pay her poll tax so that she could participate in the upcoming election, however, the local tax agent A. H. Eubank refused to accept it. Graves sued and as a result, the Constitution of Alabama was changed to reflect the Federal Amendment. However, Alabama still did not ratify the 19th amendment until **September 8, 1953**.

For non-white citizens, voter suppression continued to affect their access to the ballot until well into the **1960s**. Native Americans, for example, were denied U.S. citizenship until **1924** when President Calvin Coolidge signed into law the **Indian Citizenship Act**. Even after being granted birthright citizenship, indigenous peoples had to fight on the state level for their voting rights to be recognized. The last state to recognize Native American voting rights was Utah in **1962**.

However, despite the legal recognition, Native Americans and people of color were still denied access to the ballot through discriminatory poll taxes, literacy tests, and voter intimidation. These tactics were used across the United States until the passage of the **1965 Voting Rights Act**, which made the practices illegal and provided federal oversight at polling places. It wasn't until **1975** that Congress extended the protection of the Voting Rights Act to protect "language minorities," such as Spanish speakers.

GLOSSARY

Abolitionist (noun) a person who wants to stop or abolish slavery

Amendment (noun) the process of altering or amending a law or document (such as a constitution) by parliamentary or constitutional procedure

Bar (verb) to keep out

Census (noun) a government-issued count of a population

Deliberation (noun) the act of thinking about or discussing something with a group of people and making a decision together

Disenfranchise (verb) to deny a person or a group of people the right to vote

Egalitarian (adjective) believing in social and political equality of all people

Enfranchise (verb) to admit to the privileges of a citizen and especially the right to vote

Indigenous (adjective) native to a particular region

Jim Crow (noun) a series of discriminatory laws enforced by former slaveholding states as a way to minimize or remove the rights of African Americans and formerly enslaved people

Literate (adjective) able to read and write

Nationals (noun) people under the protection of a nation but not given the same rights as citizens, such as voting

Ratify (verb) to formally approve the adoption of a legal document, such as an amendment

Reconstruction (noun) the reorganization and reestablishment of the seceded states in the Union after the American Civil War

Resolution (noun) a formal expression of opinion, will, or intent voted by an official body or assembled group

Suffrage (noun) the right to vote

Temperance (noun) the belief in limiting or eliminating entirely the indulgence of vices such as drinking alcohol

Trail of Tears (noun) several routes over which thousands of Cherokee and other Indian peoples were forced to march and along which many died during the late 1830s to be resettled west of the Mississippi River largely in what is now Oklahoma

Unanimously (adverb) with the agreement of all

Underground Railroad (noun) a system used by abolitionists to help escaped slaves reach free states or Canada secretly and safely

Universal (adjective) completely inclusive of a population

Definitions adapted from the Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Oxford English Dictionary Online

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