

Women's Suffrage

Overview

This lesson plan will address women's suffrage and the history of the ratification of the 19th Amendment in North Carolina in conjunction with present-day voter suppression. Students will explore primary sources including images, petitions, and recordings from the Southern Oral History Project. They will also be asked to think about the relationship between women's experiences advocating for the 19th Amendment and current-day experiences with voter suppression. They will think through forms of protest and produce documents advocating for the right to vote, modeled after the advocacy work of the women seeking to gain suffrage. This lesson adds to existing content on the history of women's right to vote by focusing specifically on the experience of suffragists in North Carolina and by working through the relationship between historic and present-day voting rights.

Grades

8-12

Essential Questions

- Who in North Carolina opposed women's suffrage and for what reasons?
- In what ways was the Nineteenth Amendment neither the beginning nor the end to the story of women's rights and voting?
- Despite the Nineteenth Amendment's passage, in what ways did states still restrict the voting rights based on race and/or sex?
- In what ways did indigenous and black women influence the suffrage movement?
- Why are the contributions of black women and women of color less known than the contributions of white women who fought for suffrage throughout history?
- What did it take on the part of women of all races to finally secure the right to vote? In what ways do people today still need to continue the fight for voting rights?
- In what ways are historically marginalized group's right to vote still challenged?

Materials

- Bettie Murchison Remembers Polling Discrimination," a 2-minute audio clip from the Southern Oral History Project at <https://soundcloud.com/sohp/bettie-murchinson-remembers-polling-discrimination?in=sohp/sets/k12-teaching-resource>
- Nineteenth Amendment image, attached
- How North Carolina Failed its #MeToo Moment 100 years ago, article attached and available at <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/rob-christensen/article202972419.html>
 - Students can listen to a recording of the article at the website above while following along
- OPTIONAL: Seneca Falls Declaration and Questions to Consider, attached
- Myths About the 19th Amendment and Women's Suffrage, attached
- 11 Barriers to Voting, attached and available at <https://www.carnegie.org/topics/topic-articles/voting-rights/11-barriers-voting/>
- Additional/optional information: <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/womens-suffrage>

Duration

60-90 minutes

Procedure

Warm Up: First Vote

1. As an introduction to the day's lesson, play "[Bettie Murchison Remembers Polling Discrimination](#)," a 2-minute audio clip from the Southern Oral History Project. Don't provide students with any information, other than the instruction to listen to the 2-minute clip and write down anything that strikes them or resonates with them. Afterwards, discuss:
 - Why did Bettie Murchison's mother dress up to go vote? Why do you think she felt so much pride?
 - At the polls, Ms. Murchison noted that only white people were working – how did this make her feel and why would this be concerning to Ms. Murchison and her mother considering the history relating to both blacks and women voting?
 - Why do you think Bette signed up to work at the polls as a precinct official?
 - What finally allowed white and black women to vote?
 - This is actually a robust discussion that the class should revisit throughout this lesson. While at this point the teacher is looking for a lead-in to discussing the Nineteenth Amendment, it is important students gain the understanding by the end of this lesson that legislation is usually only part of what is needed for realizing civil rights. In actuality, it took activists fighting for suffrage both before and after the Amendment, as well as the continued fight against voter suppression tactics that remain long after the right to vote was legislated.

Introduction to the Nineteenth Amendment

2. Project the attached image of the Nineteenth Amendment, and ask students to share what they already know about this amendment and also to note what they see in the image. Discuss:
 - What was the purpose of the Nineteenth Amendment?
 - According to the image, when was the Nineteenth Amendment passed by Congress?
 - What do you imagine it took for the 19th Amendment to be ratified (passed)?
3. Have students do the math to figure out how many years it has been since the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified; write this as large as possible at the front of the room and remind students that this is how many years women have been allowed to vote. Further explain to students:
 - Passed by Congress on June 4, 1919, and ratified on August 18, 1920, the milestone of the Nineteenth Amendment required a lengthy and difficult struggle; victory took decades of agitation and protest. The approval of thirty-six states was needed to ratify the amendment; Tennessee became the thirty-sixth on August 18, 1920, fourteen months after Congress had passed it.
 - Between 1878, when the amendment was first introduced in Congress, and August 18, 1920, when it was ratified, champions of voting rights for women of all races worked tirelessly, lecturing, writing, marching, lobbying, and practicing civil disobedience to achieve what many Americans considered a radical change. Some pursued a strategy of passing suffrage acts in western states, with nine states adopting woman suffrage legislation by 1912. Others challenged male-only voting laws in the courts. Suffragists used tactics such as parades, silent vigils, and hunger strikes. Often supporters met fierce resistance. Opponents heckled, jailed, and sometimes physically abused them.
 - North Carolina eventually ratified the woman's suffrage amendment – in May 1971.
 - Sources: <http://www.historicaldocuments.com/19thAmendment.htm> and <https://www.ncpedia.org/media/map/ratification-19th>

Discuss:

- Why do you think women suffragists fought so hard to achieve the right to vote?
- Compare and contrast the role of women in the 1900s to women's roles today. How do you imagine 1900 society reacted to the idea of women voting?
- What does it take to bring about change in society?

- Are there any names or historical events that come to mind when you think of the fight for women’s suffrage?

Beyond Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton

4. Students may highlight women such as Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others, or note events such as the [Seneca Falls Convention](#), which are typically a focus when covering this history. If students are unfamiliar with this history, use this time to review it. (As an **OPTIONAL ACTIVITY**, teachers can also divide students into small groups of 3-4, and hand out copies of the attached Seneca Falls Declaration. Instruct students to read the declaration together, then discuss and answer the questions underneath.) For North Carolina specific history regarding women’s suffrage, provide that attached article *How North Carolina Failed its #MeToo Moment 100 years ago*; teachers may want to play the recording of the article at <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/rob-christensen/article202972419.html> for students to follow along with. Discuss:
 - Who opposed the right of women to vote in North Carolina and for what reasons?
 - In what ways can this very recent history of the denial of equal rights still be seen in society today?
 - When did North Carolina finally ratify the Nineteenth Amendment?
5. Once students have finished, debrief the document as a group.) While reviewing and/or discussing this history, however, make sure to highlight parts of the traditional women’s suffrage narrative that have been less told:
 - Although Seneca Falls (1848) was the first women's rights convention, some of the questions posed and resolutions drafted at this historic gathering stemmed from abolitionist activism through involvement in anti-slavery associations. [Abolitionist women](#) such as the [Grimké sisters Sarah and Angelina](#), Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton spoke out against slavery and began to make connections between abolition and women's rights. Seneca Falls brought together those invested in the struggle for women's rights and those fighting for the abolition of slavery, with some advocating for both causes. ([Source](#)) Yet, the participants were middle and upper-class white women, a cadre of white men supporters and *one* African-American male — [Frederick Douglass](#). No black women were included.
 - The suffragists met to discuss the limitations imposed on women, such as the lack of voting rights. The attending delegates adopted a statement, the Seneca Falls Declaration, that they modeled after the Declaration of Independence, as well as a series of resolutions calling for women’s suffrage and the reform of laws that gave women an inferior status. (At Seneca Falls, each of the demands passed unanimously; the right to vote was the only one in danger of failing, until Frederick Douglass backed it in an impassioned persuasive speech.) It is important to note that a group of Black women fighting to be licensed preachers had the prior spring made many of the same demands that would show up in the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments.
6. Provide students with the attached edited article, *Myths About the 19th Amendment & Women’s Suffrage*. Students should read the article and discuss the attached questions. (This can be done individually, in reading partners, or in reading groups.) Take time to discuss student responses as an entire class.

Barriers to Voting Today

7. Ask students to consider what challenges women continue to face in politics today. Although suffrage was gained, how does the fight for women’s rights continue? Transition students into considering how the history of women’s suffrage is still relevant today. Why is it important to know all of the work and sacrifice made by people in the past to ensure the right to vote for all people, regardless of race or gender, today? In what ways does this work continue? What are some barriers to voting today and how do these prevent people from having equal access to voting?
8. Have students review “11 Barriers to Voted” as reported by Carnegie in 2019. Students can visit the [website](#), or the article is also attached. Allow students to weigh in first with whether they agree that these

are barriers, as well as asking them if they feel there are barriers that exist and are not listed. (For instance, since 2019 when Carnegie released these 11 barriers, debates regarding voting by mail due to COVID-19 became prominent.) After discussing, have students (in small groups) come up with ways of advocating against voter suppression and then modeled after the women's suffrage movement in North Carolina, instruct them to make a flyer, sign, pamphlet, or rally banner that addresses a barrier of their choice.

9. This can be completed at the end of class or for homework. Upon completion, hang everything around the classroom and allow students to do a gallery walk, stopping to discuss the content of each piece of voter paraphernalia, and whether it is effective in its goal of educations about and/or removing barriers to voting.

Nineteenth Amendment

Sixty-sixth Congress of the United States of America;

At the First Session,

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the nineteenth day of May,
one thousand nine hundred and nineteen.

JOINT RESOLUTION

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution extending the right of suffrage
to women.

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States
of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein),
That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution,
which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when
ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States.*

"ARTICLE _____,

"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.

"Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate
legislation."

F. H. Lilliett

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Thos. R. Marshall

Vice President of the United States and

President of the Senate.

Source: <http://womenshistory.about.com/library/graphics/19amend.gif>

How North Carolina failed its #MeToo moment – 100 years ago **From the News & Observer | by Rob Christensen**

The #MeToo movement of a century ago did not have a hashtag and did not involve sexual harassment in its narrowest sense.

But it did involve women's fight for dignity and equality. And it faced considerable opposition from men who found the idea of women involved in politics ludicrous, threatening, socialistic or against God's plan.

One hundred years ago, voting in North Carolina was largely reserved for white men. Most black voters had been disenfranchised by literacy tests, and women were not permitted to vote or hold elective office, no matter how literate or educated. A woman who was a physician could not vote. A female school teacher could not vote. A mother who taught her sons how to read and write and think could not vote, even though her sons could.

This is what passed as plain old common sense in my grandparents' time.

Congress in January 1918 revived the Susan B. Anthony constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote, and with the backing of President Woodrow Wilson, the measure passed both houses. But it had to be ratified by three-quarters of the states before it could become part of the Constitution.

North Carolina's political leadership – all Democrats in the one-party South – were opposed. Both Tar Heel U.S. senators, Lee Overman and Furnifold Simmons, voted against giving women the vote, as did all but one of the House members. Gov. Thomas Bickett was also opposed.

The women's vote had become a racial wedge issue, Leonard Rogoff writes in his new, award-winning book on a Goldsboro social reformer and suffragette, 'Gertrude Weil, Jewish Progressive in the New South.'

Democratic leaders worried that if the vote were extended to women it would include black women and would "lead to socialism, trample on states' rights, and return the state to black rule," Rogoff writes.

There were progressive voices in North Carolina pushing to extend the franchise to women. The state Senate in 1918 passed a bill to allow women to vote in municipal elections, but it was killed in the state House.

In 1919, the legislature once again considered allowing women to vote in municipal elections. Hallet Ward, a state senator and later a congressman, declared that women's suffrage "had no place in the sunny South" and that with women in the legislature, "one box of mice" could break up the General Assembly, Rogoff writes.

State Sen. A.M. Scales of Greensboro responded by citing the biblical Deborah and Joan of Arc. The measure passed the Senate, but it was rejected by the House, whose session began with the "singing of old time Camp Meeting tunes."

For the women's suffrage amendment to become law of the land, it had to be approved by 36 states.

The amendment had the backing of Josephus Daniels, the publisher of The News and Observer and secretary of the Navy, and Lt. Gov. O. Max Gardner, the insurgent candidate for governor in 1920. William Jennings Bryan, the former Democratic presidential candidate, was brought to Raleigh to speak for the amendment. More than 8,000 North Carolina college and high school students signed a petition of support.

The suffrage amendment became an issue in the 1920 Democratic primary for governor when supporters of Cameron Morrison, the machine-backed candidate, distributed handbills – early versions of negative TV ads – showing his opponent, Gardner, locking arms with a black woman because he supported the suffrage amendment.

Morrison compared women’s suffrage to socialism, warned of the return of black rule, and called on all white women to stand together. Playing the race card on the suffrage movement helped Morrison defeat Gardner in the 1920 Democratic primary.

By the spring of 1920, 35 states had ratified the suffrage amendment and national attention was focused on North Carolina, Tennessee or Vermont as the likely final state to ratify.

The state Republican Party endorsed the amendment in 1918 and the state Democratic Executive Committee endorsed the amendment in 1920, despite opposition from its leadership.

But the amendment was opposed by planters, industrialists, railroad executives, political bosses and liquor advocates who feared women voters would bring Prohibition, an end to child labor, wage and hour laws, and health and safety regulations that would hurt their finances and upset social hierarchies, Rogoff writes.

“A vote for Federal Suffrage Is a Vote for Organized Female Nagging Forever,” said one anti-suffrage league broadside.

Pro-suffrage supporters attempted to play down the race issue by noting that California allowed women to vote, but still excluded Japanese from voting.

In August, the North Carolina and Tennessee legislatures considered the women’s suffrage amendment at the same time. A group of 63 North Carolina House members sent a telegram to the Tennessee lawmakers saying they planned to vote against the amendment and urging the Tennessee legislature to do the same.

The North Carolina Senate voted 25-23 to postpone a suffrage vote until the next session. But the Tennessee legislature made the issue moot by becoming the decisive state to ratify the 19th amendment, making women across the country eligible to vote in the November 1920 elections.

The suffrage fight is another example of North Carolina’s deep social conservatism, which has been seen on a broad range of issues over the years including Prohibition, the Equal Rights Amendment, the literacy test for voting, skepticism about a state lottery, the reluctance to legalize the sale of mixed alcoholic drinks, abortion policy and support for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages.

But never fear. North Carolina eventually ratified the woman’s suffrage amendment – in May 1971. North Carolina was a half century late in saying #MeToo.

Source: <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/rob-christensen/article202972419.html#storylink=cpy>

Name: _____

Myths About the 19th Amendment and Women's Suffrage

Text from [Olivia B. Waxmam, TIME](#) and [History.com](#)

Even a century after Tennessee became the last state to ratify the 19th Amendment on Aug. 18, 1920, there are still [a lot of misunderstandings](#) about what that 39-word addition to the Constitution did and didn't do. So much of the history that led up to that moment—and so much history was made after—has only been written in recent years and is still being written, especially as scholarship have spotlighted the diversity of the suffrage activists who weren't mentioned in earlier histories of women's suffrage.

TIME turned to historians of the women's rights movement and experts on the suffragists and voting rights activists to debunk some of the top myths and misconceptions about the significance of the 19th Amendment.

The Myth: The 19th Amendment guaranteed all American women the right to vote

The reality: After the Amendment was ratified, states passed other laws that disenfranchised women

Many people are surprised to learn that the right to vote—for any American—is not part of the original 18th-century text of the U.S. Constitution. Later Amendments established this right in reverse, by clarifying ways in which it is forbidden to limit the vote. “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,” the 19th Amendment [clarified](#).

“The text of the original Constitution does not speak about voting [rights],” says Lauren MacIvor Thompson, a historian of early-20th century law, at Georgia State University. “Yes, there is the 15th Amendment and the 19th Amendment, but they are discussing what the states can't do to restrict voting based on race/sex [respectively].”

As a result, states tried to get around the Constitutional addition—and [the 15th Amendment](#), which banned restriction of the vote “[on account of race](#)”—by passing laws requiring voters to pay a poll tax or take a literacy test, or stripping the vote from women who [married an immigrant](#).

Tests and poll taxes didn't mention “race” or “sex” but were used to target certain voters, especially African Americans. Violence and intimidation, especially lynchings, also kept people away from the polls. Some registrars even flat-out refused to process the papers, or handed Black women [a blank sheet of paper](#). The same methods of disenfranchisement also held back Latinas from voting in the South. At the same time, laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the immigration acts of 1917 and 1924 blocked Asian immigrants from citizenship, and therefore, from voting. And even though Native American voting rights activist [Gertrude Simmons Bonnin](#)—also known as Zitkala-Sa—lobbied for the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, which allowed more Native Americans to vote, [some Western states](#) didn't grant Native Americans the right to vote until 1948 (Arizona and New Mexico) and 1957 (Utah).

[The Voting Rights Act of 1965](#) would eliminate many of the obstacles women of color faced voting, but the Supreme Court in 2013 invalidated part of the law's federal oversight of state obstacles to voting rights. Voting rights activists and policymakers [continue](#) to call for updates to strengthen it.

“[The 19th Amendment] is not beginning or the end of a story,” says Lisa Tetrault, associate professor of history at Carnegie Mellon University and author of the upcoming book *A Celebrated But Misunderstood Amendment*, “but the middle of an ongoing story. It didn't start women's voting and did not complete women's voting.”

The Myth: Women couldn't vote before the 19th Amendment

The reality: Whether a woman could vote before 1920 depended on where she lived, her race and her citizenship status

In about half of U.S. states—18, such as New York and California—some American women, including Black women, were able to [vote](#) in local, state and federal elections, prior to the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, [according to](#) the Eagleton Institute of Politics. Twenty-two states, like Illinois, had partial suffrage, meaning women could vote in certain elections, and [only eight states had no suffrage](#). At least 3,586 women [ran for office](#) in the 50 years before 1920, a fact that helped show political strategists that women were a bloc they couldn't ignore. Those victories were mostly in the new territories in the West, which used suffrage as a lure to attract new residents; [more than 750 women](#) were elected to various offices in Kansas before 1912.

Women were also voting before the United States even existed. Women voted in the colonies before they lost the right to vote during the American Revolution, and indigenous women in North America were voting before the European settlers arrived.

“Indigenous women have had a political voice in their nations on this land for over 1,000 years,” Sally Roesch Wagner, historian and editor of the 2019 anthology *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, points out. “Women's rights is not a new concept on this land; it's a very, very old one. And the clan mothers of the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, the Haudenosaunee women, have had political voice for 1,000 years.”

Several important suffragists, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage and Lucretia Mott, had contacts with Haudenosaunee women and saw them as an example. “I think [seeing the power of indigenous women] made it possible for them to imagine a different way of being and it was so far beyond the vote,” Wagner says.

The Myth: The most important suffragists were white

The reality: Women of color played a key role in suffrage movement—but got left out of the retelling of it

Historically, attention has focused on the efforts of white movement leaders like [Susan B. Anthony](#), [Alice Paul](#) and [Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#). But they worked alongside many lesser-known non-white suffragists who made crucial contributions to the cause—while also battling racism and discrimination.

At a time in America when the majority of Black people were enslaved and women were rarely encouraged to have political opinions—much less share them in public—**Frances Ellen Watkins Harper** became a genuine celebrity as an orator. Second only to abolitionist [Frederick Douglass](#) in terms of prominent African American writers of her era, the poet, essayist and novelist frequently went on speaking tours to discuss slavery, civil rights and suffrage—and donated many of the proceeds from her books to the Underground Railroad.

When it came to the cause of women's suffrage, Harper was convinced it would not be achieved unless Black and white women worked together. But while Harper initially worked with leaders like Stanton and Anthony, “she was also one of the first women to call them out in terms of their racism,” notes Jenkins. Harper's most famous confrontation came when she spoke at the 1866 National Women's Rights Convention. “You white women speak here of rights,” Harper [told the crowd](#), calling them out for their lack of female solidarity across racial divides. “I speak of wrongs.”

Mary Ann Shadd Cary, whose parents used her childhood home as a refuge for fugitive slaves, became the first Black woman in North America to publish a newspaper, *The Provincial Freeman*, in which she fearlessly advocated for abolition. After helping recruit Black soldiers for the [Civil War](#) and founding a school for the children of freed slaves, she taught school by day while attending law school at night, becoming one of the first Black female law graduates in the United States in 1883. When the suffrage movement gained steam in the 1870s, after the 15th Amendment granted the vote to Black men, she became an outspoken activist for women's rights, including the right to cast a ballot.

Cary's legal and publishing background served her well in the fight for enfranchisement. In 1874, she was one of several suffragists who testified before the House Judiciary Committee about the importance of the right to vote. In her remarks, Cary stressed the unjustness of denying women—who were both taxpayers and American citizens—access to the ballot box.

Pushed out of the mainstream suffrage movement by white leaders, Black suffragists through the 1800s founded their own clubs in cities across the U.S. Along with church-based organizing, the club movement was the foundation for so much activism by Black women in their communities. With the creation of the [National Association of Colored Women \(NACW\)](#) in 1896, suffragists **Mary Church Terrell** and co-founder Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin became instrumental in consolidating Black suffrage groups across the country. Their agenda went beyond women's enfranchisement, addressing issues of job training, equal pay, educational opportunity and child care for African Americans. Terrell, an educator, writer and organizer, also focused her work on fighting lynching, Jim Crow segregation and convict leasing, a system of forced penal labor.

The daughter of formerly enslaved people who became successful business owners in Memphis, Tennessee, Terrell was one of the first Black women to obtain a college degree, earning both a bachelor's and master's degree from Oberlin College. She also became the first Black woman appointed to the Washington, D.C.'s Board of Education, and led a successful campaign to desegregate the city's hotels and restaurants.

In an 1898 address to the National American Women's Suffrage Association, she summarized her life's work: "Seeking no favors because of our color, nor patronage because of our needs, we knock at the bar of justice, asking an equal chance."

In more than 200 speeches she gave across the country, educator, feminist and suffragist **Nannie Helen Burroughs** stressed the importance of women's self-reliance and economic freedom. A member of National Association of Colored Women, the National Association of Wage Earners and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, she saw voting as a crucial tool of empowerment, an extension of her lifetime commitment to educating African American women. One of her lasting achievements was to launch and run the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D.C.

Burroughs also spoke of the need to address the lynchings of Black Americans throughout the country. "The most important question that Black activists were concerned with from 1916 to 1920—the years before the 19th Amendment—were lynching and white mob violence against Black people," says Jenkins. Because of that, activists like Burroughs, Terrell and Wells saw the right to vote as a tool to create laws and protections for African Americans throughout the country.

In addition to being one of the most prominent anti-lynching activists and respected journalists of the early 20th century (she owned two newspapers) **Ida B. Wells** was also a strident supporter of women's voting rights. In 1913, Wells, one of the founders of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#), co-founded the Alpha Suffrage Club, Chicago's first African American suffrage organization. The club was notable for its focus on educating Black women about civics and its advocacy for the election of Black political officials.

But Wells and her peers often faced racism from the larger suffrage movement. When she and other Black suffragists tried to join a national suffrage march in Washington, D.C., in 1913, movement leader [Alice Paul instructed them](#) to walk at the back end of the crowd. Wells refused. "Either I go with you or not at all," she told organizers. "I am not taking this stand because I personally wish for recognition. I am doing it for the future benefit of my whole race."

Other women of color also worked tirelessly for the rights of all women. [Adelina "Nina" Otero-Warren](#) lobbied New Mexico legislators to pass the 19th Amendment. According to Cathleen D. Cahill, associate professor of history at Penn State, "At the last minute, New Mexico ratification is looking a little bit like it might not go

through. Without her, New Mexico wouldn't have ratified [the 19th Amendment] and without New Mexico, the amendment might not have been ratified because every one of those states was essential."

[Mabel Lee](#), a 16-year-old incoming Barnard College student and future economist, was front and center at a 1912 suffragist parade in New York City. At that event, suffragists tried to shame American politicians by [arguing](#) that China was going to give women the right to vote before the U.S., following the [1911 revolution](#) that overthrew the empire and established a republic. (In fact, China [wasn't as far ahead](#) as the suffragists thought.)

Despite the incredible contributions by black women and women of color, because they were excluded from white suffragists' events, their stories often remain hidden. Many suffragists of color were also left out of what's long been considered the definitive history of the 19th century movement, the six-volume series called *History of Woman Suffrage*. Published between 1881 and 1922, and spanning more than 5700 pages, it features profiles of women who paid for their portraits to be in the book. "Susan B. Anthony herself recognized that this was possibly a problem [and] that by requiring the people whose portraits were in the book to actually pay for those portraits to be in a book would limit the vision, and yet she did it anyway," says Allison K. Lange, associate professor of history at the Wentworth. "The women whose portraits became part of that book really are the women that we most often remember today and they're the women whose portraits are in most archival collections."

Even after the 19th Amendment passed, promising that the right to vote would "not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," women of color continued to be barred from casting ballots in many states with tactics like poll taxes and literacy tests. Suffrage battles continued for decades—often against a backdrop of intimidation and violence. Yet mid-century activists, like **Fannie Lou Hamer**, fought on, knowing the vote was a crucial tool for changing oppressive laws and dismantling entrenched racism.

Sources: <https://time.com/5879346/19th-amendment-facts-myths/> and <https://www.history.com/news/black-suffragists-19th-amendment>

Think About It:

- What does Lisa Tetrault mean when she says that the Nineteenth Amendment wasn't the beginning or the end to the story of women's rights and voting? What examples of this can you cite?
- Despite the Nineteenth Amendment's passage, in what ways did states still restrict the voting rights based on race and/or sex?
- In what ways did indigenous women influence the suffrage movement?
- Why are the contributions of black women less known than the contributions of white women who fought for suffrage throughout history?
- What did it take on the part of women of all races to finally secure the right to vote? In what ways do people today still need to continue the fight for voting rights?

11 Barriers to Voting

*Here are some of the most common ways voting rights are undermined across the country
Carnegie Corporation of New York, November 1, 2019*

Legislators in states that have a long track record of voter suppression often implement laws and engage in activities that make it harder for certain segments of the population to vote. Here are some of the most common ways voting rights are undermined across the country.

Voter ID requirements. Election officials use false claims of rampant voter fraud to justify strict requirements like a photo ID, often aimed at suppressing the votes of people of color and younger voters. Laws requiring a physical street address discriminate against groups that are more likely to have P.O. Box addresses, such as Native Americans living on reservations.

Lack of language access. The English-language requirements of the past may be gone, but voting rights groups regularly receive reports that local jurisdictions are not translating materials or offering language assistance as required by law, proving a persistent barrier to increased voting among language minorities in the Asian American and Latino communities.

Voter roll purges. Under the guise of reviewing voter rolls to remove duplicate names, the names of deceased individuals, or those with standing felony convictions, officials have undertaken indiscriminate “purges” of voter lists in recent years, deleting millions of eligible voters’ names, often with a disproportionate impact on communities of color.

Polling place closures/consolidations. A recent USA Today analysis found that election officials have closed thousands of polling places, largely affecting communities of color. For example, in Chicago’s Cook County, which has the largest non-Hispanic black population in the country, election administrators closed or moved 95 polling places.

Lack of funding for elections. A lack of funding inhibits the ability of localities to manage elections that ensure everyone’s vote counts equally. Some of these problems came to the fore during the 2000 presidential election in Florida, where the recount process shined a spotlight on issues ranging from flawed ballot designs to voting machines that overheated and failed.

Provisional ballot requirements. Federal law allows voters whose eligibility is in question to use a provisional ballot to be counted once the voter is confirmed eligible. However, localities set their own rules in how many provisional ballots to print and training poll workers on processing them, resulting in eligible voters being turned away or their ballots discounted.

Reduced early voting. States and localities have long used early voting to reduce Election Day crunch and open up the process to prospective voters bound by work or other commitments. Faith-based groups have also used early voting for nonpartisan get-out-the-vote efforts. Recently, officials across the nation have curtailed early voting, largely hitting communities of color.

Reduced voting hours. Like limiting early voting, reducing voting hours can make voting less convenient, and even impossible, for many voters. Low-income and working-class people often have less freedom to arrive late or leave early from work, or to take a break from their shifts in the middle of the day. Parents with inflexible childcare arrangements can be similarly impacted.

Poorly trained poll workers. Poll workers need good training to follow the right policies like properly checking IDs, giving language assistance, identifying voter intimidation, and offering provisional ballots. Yet a lack of

funding, coupled with a lack of commitment to making voting welcoming and convenient, means poll workers are poorly equipped to do their jobs.

Partisan election administrators. Our country's highly decentralized election system hands the responsibility for managing elections to state and local administrators, some of them partisan officials with a clear interest in election outcomes favorable to their parties and candidates. Too often, this results in efforts to suppress the votes of groups that might be viewed as opponents.

Creation of at-large local offices to dilute minority vote. An at-large election covers voters across a city or county, in contrast to smaller district elections, which can often result in higher representation for people of color since votes are not diluted by an area-wide population. As a result, some officials create at-large districts to limit the influence of minority communities.

Source: <https://www.carnegie.org/topics/topic-articles/voting-rights/11-barriers-voting/>

Seneca Falls Declaration

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men--both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming to all intents and purposes, her master--the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women--the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her. He allows her in Church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation--in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and National legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions embracing every part of the country.

Source: E.C. Stanton, S.B. Anthony and M.J. Gage, eds., History of Women's Suffrage, vol. 1 (1887), 70.

Discuss the following in your group and summarize your answers on notebook paper.

1. Describe the complaints that are issued in this declaration.
2. Which complaints do you feel are most valid/serious and why?
3. How does this document compare to the Declaration of Independence? How do these complaints resemble complaints of Patriots?
4. Based on what you learned about 1800s society after reading this document, how would your life differ if you lived then rather than now?
5. Are any of the complaints outlined still problematic in today's society? Explain.
6. Why is this document relevant to us today?