

Woman's suffrage



| Woman's Suffrage| History 122: American History from 1877| Professor Thomas Shepard | Laura Davidson | 12/14/2011| Thesis: The Constitution did not initially make reference to the rights of women. Obtaining equal rights for women was a long and intense battle. Women fought for many rights such as, birth control and the right to keep wages. However, the largest of the woman's rights struggles was for suffrage. | Woman's Suffrage The limits of freedom for women can be seen throughout history.

Evidence of woman's challenges to achieve equal rights can be observed in many state and federal Constitutional Amendments, Court and Supreme Court rulings, and woman's groups. The women that fought for the right to vote were known as suffragists and they were perceived as immoral by many people. In 1848, the first woman's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. After much deliberation, the Declaration of Sentiments was signed, which defined complaints and set the itinerary for what would come to be known as the woman's rights movement. ' The contest with the South that destroyed slavery,' wrote the Philadelphia lawyer Sidney George Fisher in his diary ' has caused an immense increase in the popular passion for liberty and equality. '" Women suffragists viewed Reconstruction as their opportunity to obtain their own emancipation. "' No less than blacks,' proclaimed Elizabeth Cady Stanton, women had reached a ' transition period, from slavery to freedom. '" "' The rewriting of the Constitution,' declared suffrage leader Olympia Brown, provided the chance to separate the permissions of freedom from sex as well as race and to ' bury the black man and the woman in the citizen. '" However, supporters of woman's rights still encountered the limitations of the Reconstruction assurance of equality. The

term male was presented in the Constitution for the first time, in 1868, when the 14th Amendment clause specified that any state that refused the right to vote to any particular group of men would be penalized. Consequently, the 14th Amendment didn't improve the prospect of voting rights for women as the suffragists had hoped it would. In fact, it actually made things worse by only providing voting rights to men specifically.

In October of 1972, a woman by the name of Virginia Minor had her voter's application denied in the state of Missouri. According to the registrar, Reese Happersett, Ms. Minor's application was denied because the Missouri's constitution stated: " Every male citizen of the United States shall be entitled to vote. " In the Supreme Court's unanimous decision of, *Minor v. Happersett*, the court held that the Constitution doesn't guarantee women suffrage in federal elections. Woman's rights leaders Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton tried to have the language of the 14th Amendment contain women.

But, many people thought that the issue was too controversial. Additionally, there were many that thought that the approval of the amendment would be in jeopardy if such a controversial issue were included. While the Second Clause of the 14th Amendment penalized the rejection of the right to vote to men, it did not actually deny women the right to vote. In 1868, ninety-five years after it was ratified, the 15th Amendment was also signed into law; the amendment banned discrimination in suffrage based on race, not gender.

The 14th and 15th amendments created a hostile divide between feminists, Radical Republicans, and within feminist circles. Although the 15th

amendment did not guarantee suffrage for women, Susan B. Anthony used it as justification to vote in a New York election. Ms. Anthony was detained and fined for voting, but the episode proved as motivation to continue the battle for suffrage for women. In May of 1869, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed an organization, the National Woman Suffrage Association, with the sole purpose of having an amendment included in the U.

S. Constitution that would guarantee suffrage for women. In November of 1869, Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell formed an organization, the American Woman Suffrage Association, which was focused solely on achieving the right to vote for women by having amendments added to state constitutions. The first success for the American Woman Suffrage Association was on December 10, 1869, when Wyoming approved the first woman's suffrage ruling; the next year, women started serving on juries in the state of Wyoming.

The 1890's were the beginning of a three-decade period that would later be known as the woman's era. During the woman's era, women relished greater opportunities than they'd ever had before such as, financial independence and playing a bigger role in public affairs. It was also during this time that almost every state had implemented rulings that gave married women control of their individual salaries and property, the right to enter into separate contracts, and the right to create their own wills. Nevertheless, women were still deprived of the right to vote.

Through a system of clubs, associations, and organizations, women employed an increasing impact on public affairs. " In an 1895 speech, given by Frances Willard, the president of the woman's Christian Temperance Union, she stated, ' A wider freedom is coming to the women of America. Too long has it been held that woman has no right to enter these movements. So much for the movements. Politics is the place for woman. '" During the woman's era, women were resolute to obtain their right to vote. Leading women spoke in public and wrote papers in which they stressed their endless fortitude.

In 1875, Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted an essay, *Home Life*, in which she demanded the awareness of equality. In the essay she says, " A question of magnitude presses on our consideration whether man and woman are equal, joint heir to all their richness and joy of earth and heaven, or whether they were eternally ordained, one to be sovereign, the other slave. " In Frances E. Willard's 1883, *Women and Temperance*, she stated, " Let it be remembered that for every Christian man who has a voice in making and enforcing laws; there are at least two Christian women who have no voice at all. In 1893, the states in the West started to pave the road to entitle women to suffrage. Colorado was the first state to approve an amendment entitling women to suffrage. In 1896, Utah and Idaho followed suit. Although still prohibited from holding office and voting in most states, women became a key element in the Progressive era's political history. Jane Addams was the Progressive era's most significant female reformer. Ms. Addams resented the popular belief that a woman should be expected to dedicate herself completely to her husband, her parents, and her children.

Suffragists confronted the obstructions that prohibited them from official political participation and they established a democratic viewpoint of a Progressive government. Their efforts were rewarded by the placement of new comprehensions of woman's liberty on the political agenda. In 1910, Washington State granted women the right to vote and in 1911, California did the same. Then in 1912, Oregon, Kansas, and Arizona allowed women the right to vote. Likewise in 1912, the Progressive party platform presented a number of proposals in order to encourage social justice.

The proposals put forth the idea for a modern, democratic, and welfare state, which included women suffrage. " This platform was described by Roosevelt as the ' most important document' since the end of the civil war. " In 1913, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns formed the Congressional Union, which was later named the National Woman's Party, in order to work to have a federal amendment to give women the right to vote. Members of the group gained national recognition when they practiced forms of civil defiance, such as picketing the White House. 1913 was also the year that Illinois allowed women the right to vote, and in 1914, Alaska, Montana, and Nevada did the same. President Wilson warily endorsed suffrage for women in 1916. The majority of woman suffrage organization leaders readily joined in the effort of World War I. Women believed that participating in the wartime effort would help them obtain equality at home. Women supported the effort in a number of ways such as selling bonds, organizing rallies, going to work in war-based manufacturing jobs, and approximately 22, 000 women worked in clerical positions and as nurses with U.

S. troops in Europe. During the same period, a fresh group of college educated suffragists formed the National Woman's Party, which pursued woman's suffrage with aggressive tactics that many older suffragists thought were disgraceful. The National Woman's Party's leader, Alice Paul, embraced a methodology that included detainments, incarcerations, and resilient criticisms of a male controlled politics. " Paul asked, ' How could the country fight for democracy abroad, while denying it to women at home? " A group of Ms. Paul's supporters received a seven-month jail sentence when they decided to chain themselves to a White House fence. During their incarceration, they were force fed when they initiated a hunger strike. A number of factors pushed the administration toward total support of a woman's right to vote. The patriotic service of women and the public outrage regarding the cruelty Ms. Paul and other inmates were subjected to could not be ignored. Wilson proclaimed, ' We have made partners of the women in this war. Shall we admit them only to a partnership of sufferings and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right? '" In a 1917 address to Congress, Carrie Chapman Catt made this powerful statement: Behold our Uncle Sam floating the banner with one hand, ' taxation without representation is tyranny,' and with the other seizing the billions of dollars paid in taxes by women to whom he refuses ' representation. Behold him again, welcoming the boys of twenty-one and the newly made immigrant citizens to ' a voice in their own government' while he denies that fundamental right of democracy to thousands of women public school teachers from whom many of these men learn all they know of citizenship and patriotism, to women college presidents, to women who preach in our pulpits, interpret law in our courts, preside over our hospitals, write books

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and magazines. Is there a single man who can justify such inequality of treatment, set outrageous discrimination? Not one.

Although Susan B. Anthony wrote the federal woman suffrage amendment and introduced to Congress in 1878, it wasn't until 1919 that it was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives. Next, it was sent to be approved by the states. In 1920, the extensive challenge for woman's suffrage ended with the approval from the states of the 19th amendment. The amendment prohibits states from using gender as a requirement for the right to vote. On August 26, 1920, Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby signed the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was signed into law.

The 19th amendment entitles every American woman to the right to vote, which forever transformed the appearance of the U. S. constituency. Obtaining suffrage for U. S. women involved decades of tension and dispute. Countless suffragists gave speeches, wrote, marched, lobbied, and participated in civil defiance to accomplish what so many Americans believed was a radical modification of the Constitution. Even though their adversaries harassed, incarcerated, and sometimes physically mistreated them, they persevered. After achieving woman's suffrage, woman's rights organization did not fade into the background.

Instead, they joined their societal influence together with their new voting rights to contribute to the improvement of circumstances for women throughout the nation. Their impact was noticed both openly and inconspicuously in many governmental actions that facilitated improved conditions for women. The U. S. became the 27th country to grant the right

to vote to women. The 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States: 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. Neither the United nor any state has the right to keep a citizen from voting because she is a woman. Congress has the power to make laws that will make this amendment effective. Bibliography Foner, Eric. Give Me Liberty! An American History. Volume 2. Seagull Third Edition. . New York : W. W. Norton, 2010. 644, 654-655, 698-703, 711, 723, 729-730. Foner, Eric. Voices of Freedom. A Documentary History. Third Edition. Volume Two. . New York: W. W. Norton, 2010. 14, 66, 113. " The Woman's Suffrage Movement. League of Women Voters of the Greater Dayton Area. 1994. <http://lwvdayton.org/SuffrHist/SuffrCurricul.pdf> (accessed Dec. 11, 2011). Blackwell, Henry B. " Woman Suffrage Leaflet; Objections to Woman Suffrage Answered. " Wikisource. 1896. http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Objections_to_Woman_Suffrage_Answered (accessed Dec. 9, 2011). America, Eighty-Ninth Congress of the United States of. " Voting Rights Act (1965). " Our Documents. 1965. <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=100> (accessed Dec. 2011). About the History of Woman's Rights in America. Sept. 8, 2011. <http://www.surfnetkids.com/go/150/about-the-history-of-womens-rights-in-america/> (accessed Dec. 2011). Lewis, Jone Johnson. " Minor v. Happersett; Voting Rights for Women Tested. " About.com. 2011. http://womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrage1865/a/minor_v_happ.htm (accessed Dec. 2011). Minor v. Happersett. 88 U. S. 162; 21 Wall. 162 (Supreme Court of the United States, <https://assignbuster.com/womans-suffrage/>

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