

Alice Paul Narrative

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Women's suffrage refers to the economic and political movement aimed at providing the right to women to vote. **Alice Paul** was a leader in the reform movement that led to the passing of the 19th Amendment which prohibits each of the states and the federal government from denying any citizen the right to vote because of that citizen's sex.

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When the constitution was written only white men were allowed to vote. Women did not have other rights as well such as the right to own property or education for certain jobs.

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The Women's suffrage origins can be traced to the United States in the late 1820s early 1830s. Women in the anti-slavery abolition movement of the 1830s recognized parallels between the legal condition of slaves and that of women.

Women's suffrage activists pointed out that blacks had been granted the right to vote in the Fourteenth (1868) and Fifteenth amendments (1870) (which gave people the right to vote regardless of their race).

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Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who attended the 1840 anti-slavery convention, used her experience to organize with others the Seneca Falls Convention held in Seneca Falls, NY.

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The Declaration of Sentiments is a document created at Seneca Falls, it was signed by 68 women and 32 men. The principal author of the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments was Elizabeth Cady Stanton. It followed the form of the United States Declaration of Independence. The Declaration caused much controversy. Many people respected the courage and abilities behind the drafting of the document, but were unwilling to abandon conventional mindsets. An article in the Oneida Whig published soon after the convention described the document as "the most shocking and unnatural event ever recorded in the history of womanity." Here is an excerpt from the opening paragraph written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

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Early victories for women's voting rights were won in the territories of Wyoming (1869) and Utah (1870). By the end of the nineteenth century, Idaho, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming had enfranchised women due to efforts by the suffrage associations at the state level.

During the Civil War (1861-1865), women's suffrage was overshadowed by the war effort and movement for the abolition of slavery. Activists such as slave-born Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony lectured and petitioned the government for the emancipation of slaves with the belief that, once the war was over, women and slaves alike would be granted the same rights as the white men. At the end of the war, however, the government saw the suffrage of women and that of the Negro as two separate issues and it was decided that the Negro vote could produce the immediate political gain.

This could be seen in the passing of the Fourteenth (1868) and Fifteenth amendments (1870) (which gave people the right to vote regardless of their race).

The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was formed as a merger of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) in May of 1890.

However, in the early 20th century growing opposition and frustration by women led Alice Paul and others to move in another direction.

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Alice Paul while attending college in England joins in the suffragist's movement in Great Britain and is imprisoned three times. She along with fellow American Lucy Burns go on hunger strikes and are force-fed. Paul and Lucy Burns gave a new direction to the women's rights movement in the United States. After a divisive struggle within NAWSA, Paul and Burns left to form a newly independent Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, later renamed the National Woman's Party (NWP). For the next two years, many members of NWP, including, Paul and Burns, adopted the radical tactics of the British suffragettes, and campaigned for the first Equal Rights Amendment. The members of NWP were mostly white, middle-class, enfranchised women who were willing to risk respectability, comfort, and even freedom to extend the franchise nationally

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The Woman's Party was one of the first groups in the United States to employ the techniques of classic non-violent protest. These techniques included tactics such as: information warfare, picketing, and leafleting.

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In 1916, neither political party endorsed woman suffrage in its platform, but both parties called on the states to give women the vote.

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Jan. 10, 1917: The NWP began to picket the White House. The NWP was the first group ever to picket the White House. Opponents would argue that it bordered on treason especially when the United States entered World War I in April of that same year. Alice Paul faced the dilemma of continuing to picket the president during the war. Paul whose single-mindedness about women's equality had never wavered reasoned that America's involvement in a war for democracy had no moral ground if the nation refused to grant all of its citizens the right to vote. The NWP continued picketing. Thousands of local women, unaffiliated with the NWP, volunteered for the picket lines. While the public initially supported the picketers, by the time President Wilson had declared war support plummeted.

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Picketers were arrested for "obstructing traffic". Many including Alice Paul were convicted, incarcerated, and tortured at Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia. In protest of conditions Alice Paul commenced a hunger strike with others later joining her. She and others were force-fed with "The Stomach Tube."

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Demonstrations and continued press coverage of the torture forced the Wilson Administration to push for support of legislation. Finally, on Aug. 20, 1920, the 19th Amendment became part of the United States Constitution when Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify it.

Though she gave up leadership of the NWP after 1920. She drafted an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was introduced in Congress in 1923. During World War II, when the war effort required women to participate in the labor force, the ERA was revived once again. In the 1950s, Paul lobbied Congress to include sex discrimination among the equal protections advanced by the Civil Rights bill and succeeded in securing equal rights for women in employment in 1964.

Paul died on July 9, 1977 in Moorestown, New Jersey. In this same year, the ERA amendment, needing just three votes was defeated, ending the movement to provide women with a constitutional right to equal justice.

