Women’s Suffrage Movement and Alice Paul

Created by Jim Carlson
• When the United States Constitution was written, only white men had the right to vote. Women were not allowed to vote under the law. Women also did not have many other rights such as the right to own property or to be educated for certain jobs.
Women in the anti-slavery abolition movement of the 1830s recognized parallels between the legal condition of slaves and that of women.
Seneca Falls Convention (1848)

- Elizabeth Cady Stanton attended the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention and her experience led her to the struggle for women’s rights.
- In 1848, Quakers and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized a women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, NY.
- The Declaration of Sentiments is drafted.
“. . . 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. . . . 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 has no voice. . .”

Elizabeth Cady Stanton,
_The Declaration of Sentiments_
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.

However, growing opposition fostered a sense of impatience among women who had waited over 50 years since the Seneca Falls Convention for a constitutional amendment granting the right to vote.
Alice Paul

- Alice Paul while attending college in England joins in the suffragists movement in Great Britain and is imprisoned three times. She along with fellow American Lucy Burns go on hunger strikes and is force-fed.
- Alice Paul and Lucy Burns gave a new direction to the women’s rights movement in the United States.
- In 1913, Paul and Burns organized the National Woman’s Party (NWP), adopted the radical tactics of the British suffragettes, and campaigned for the first Equal Rights Amendment.
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.
In 1916, neither political party endorsed woman suffrage in its platform, but both parties called on the states to give women the vote.
Jan. 10, 1917: The NWP began to picket the White House.
Protests Lead to Arrest

- 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 other were force-fed with "The Stomach Tube."
- "The sensation is most painful," reported a victim in 1909. "The drums of the ears seem to be bursting and there is a horrible pain in the throat and breast. The tube is pushed down twenty inches; [it] must go below the breastbone." The prisoners were generally fed a solution of milk and eggs.
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.