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“NOT AS A FAVOR, NOT AS A PRIVILEGE, BUT AS A RIGHT”: WOMAN SUFFRAGISTS, RACE, RIGHTS, AND THE NINETEENTH AMENDMENT

JOAN MARIE JOHNSON*

This brief history of the woman suffrage movement shows how various suffragists believed the right to vote for women was a human right that all American citizens should possess, while other suffragists viewed their struggle as one for respect and protection from abusive men. These differences are particularly salient in the fraught role of black woman suffragists, who, while dedicated to the cause, were frequently unwelcome in the white-dominated state and national movements.

In January 1910, white suffragist Alva Belmont met with three black suffragists—Irene Moorman, Sarah Garnet, and Maria Lawton—to discuss forming a black branch of Belmont’s suffrage organization. According to a newspaper report, when Belmont was asked if she advocated “social as well as political equality? . . . ‘It most certainly does.’ she answered decisively.”¹ Just under five years later, Belmont appeared at a conference of southern white suffragists held in Chattanooga, Tennessee. This time, when asked a similar question by the local newspaper, she replied, “Negro women could share the rights of negro men. If they are disfranchised, let women share the same treatment.”² In this piece I hope to frame the historical context for our discussion with some background on why women wanted the right to vote—including Alva Belmont, Irene Moorman, and others—as well as

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1. *Mrs. Belmont Takes New Step in Woman’s Rights Fight*, N.Y. TRIB., Feb. 7, 1910, at 5.

2. *Ovation for Mrs. Belmont*, CHATTANOOGA DAILY TIMES, Nov. 11, 1914, at 8.

address the fraught role of race and racism within the movement, both the possibilities and the failures. I will share a brief, and thereby necessarily limited, history, which highlights important moments and participants, ranging from the mid-nineteenth century through the final ten-year push that helped propel passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the uneven aftermath of victory in 1920.

Research by historians, and more recently, attention in the *New York Times* and other media, has transformed both scholars' and the public's understanding of the history of the woman suffrage movement. The history of that history is part of this dramatic change. We now know how Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony largely controlled the narrative through their six volume *History of Woman Suffrage*.³ These volumes privileged their roles and downplayed the work of rival leaders, as well as the work of women of color and working-class women (including Socialists).

In the last couple of decades, by rereading the archives and finding new sources, historians tell a much richer story that goes beyond Stanton, Anthony, and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)—and Barbara Berenson, the keynote speaker at this symposium,⁴ has done some of this retelling. Our story also follows the money to explain how an infusion of large contributions funded new strategies and tactics; reveals the racism within the movement and the crucial activism of black women and other women of color (though there is far less published work on Latina, Native, and Asian American women);⁵ and explores the same-sex relationships that sustained many suffragists. Thus, the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 has been reframed as a bittersweet victory, one in which mostly white women

3. See generally LISA TETRAULT, *THE MYTH OF SENECA FALLS: MEMORY AND THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT, 1848–1898* (2014).

4. This Article is based on a talk given at a symposium entitled *On Account of Sex: Women's Suffrage and the Role of Gender in Politics Today*, hosted by the Western New England School of Law on November 1, 2019.

5. See generally LORI D. GINZBURG, *UNTIDY ORIGINS: A STORY OF WOMAN'S RIGHTS IN ANTEBELLUM NEW YORK* (2005); SUSAN GOODIER & KAREN PASTORELLO, *WOMEN WILL VOTE: WINNING SUFFRAGE IN NEW YORK STATE* (2017); JOAN MARIE JOHNSON, *FUNDING FEMINISM: MONIED WOMEN, PHILANTHROPY, AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, 1870–1967* (2017); MARTHA S. JONES, *ALL BOUND UP TOGETHER: THE WOMAN QUESTION IN AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC CULTURE, 1830–1900* (Waldo E. Martin & Patricia Sullivan eds., 2009); ROSALYN TERBORGH-PENN, *AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE VOTE, 1850–1920* (Darlene Clark Hine et al. eds., Ind. Univ. Press 1998). These authors also posited the 1848 Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls as a starting point for the movement; Ginzburg shows that women, including Native Women in the Northeast, were already demanding political rights before Seneca Falls.

were enfranchised, while many women of color were still prevented from registering to vote.

So, as we contemplate nearly one hundred years since the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, what have we learned that helps us to think about gender, race, and voting rights today?

I will begin by spending just a couple of moments on the nineteenth century to showcase how women framed the demand for the franchise, which took place at least as early as 1846, with three petitions to the New York State constitutional convention. Six women from Jefferson County asserted their right to vote because the right to govern comes from “the consent of the governed.”⁶ Their decision to petition may well have been inspired by the Cherokee Women’s Council’s petitions in 1817 and 1818 resisting removal.⁷

The first women’s rights convention in the world was held two years later in Seneca Falls, New York, where the Declaration of Sentiments, written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and modeled on the Declaration of Independence, boldly proclaimed that all men and women were created equal. Enumerating the ways men oppressed women, she began with how women were rendered powerless without the vote; other oppressions could therefore follow, such as being denied the right to education or barred from professions.

In addition to Stanton and Anthony, a number of both black and white orators made the rounds of the women’s rights conventions that followed Seneca Falls annually until the Civil War. After the war, during Reconstruction, that opportunity for black and white women to share space—though not necessarily equal treatment—remained. The Rollin sisters, for example, led the South Carolina Women’s Rights Association in the 1860s and 1870s. Lottie attended the AWSA convention and addressed the state house in 1869. “We ask suffrage not as a favor, not as a privilege,” she demanded, “but as a right based on the ground that we are human beings, and as such entitled to all human rights.”⁸ This statement, echoing the 1846 petition, represented the central argument for universal suffrage at the time: as a human right.

6. Jacob Katz Cogan & Lori D. Ginzberg, *1846 Petition for Woman's Suffrage, New York State Constitutional Convention*, 22 *SIGNS* 427, 431 (1997) (quotations omitted).

7. Cherokee women petitioned for land, then Catherine Beecher petitioned for Cherokee women, all before the suffrage petitions of the 1840s and beyond. See generally Tiya Miles, “Circular Reasoning”: *Recentering Cherokee Women in the Antiremoval Campaigns*, 61 *AM. Q.* 221, 221–43 (2009).

8. Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., “The Remarkable Misses Rollin”: *Black Women in Reconstruction South Carolina*, 92 *S.C. HIST. MAG.* 172, 184 (1991).

Women suffragists used the Reconstruction-era Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to argue that they were already franchised; the Fourteenth Amendment used “persons,” not “males,” when it defined citizenship.⁹ The Fifteenth Amendment, they argued, proved that *voting was a right, not a privilege; it was inherent, not bestowed*. Susan B. Anthony and dozens of other women around the country, including two hundred black women in North Carolina, tried to vote in 1871 and 1872 based on this principle.¹⁰ They were largely unsuccessful, and Anthony was arrested. The irony was that Anthony had earlier been willing to ally herself with notoriously racist Democrats against the Fifteenth Amendment because it did not include sex when it prohibited disfranchisement due to race, color, and previous condition of servitude.

The movement took on new momentum in the 1910s, due in part to new leaders at the national and local levels, including the dynamic Alice Paul. A Quaker from New Jersey who had been radicalized by the British militant suffragette movement, Alice Paul returned home determined to light a fire under the staid U.S. movement. She focused on winning a federal amendment (rather than a state-by-state approach) and called on women in the states who could vote to hold the party in power and vote them out. Furthermore, she embraced a more militant, public style, including parades and the White House pickets, which ultimately landed women in jail, where many, including Paul, were force-fed.

Paul planned the first women’s march on Washington: a suffrage parade held the day before Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration in March 1913. Paul called for a \$14,000 budget for the parade at a time when the entire annual budget for NAWSA was \$38,000.¹¹ The dramatic increase in funding that came mostly from a small number of very wealthy women, therefore, is key to understanding the changing dynamics in the movement in the 1910s. The largest donation came in 1914 when Mrs. Frank Leslie left her entire million-dollar estate to the president of NAWSA, Carrie Chapman Catt.¹²

9. U.S. CONST. amend. XIV. The Fourteenth Amendment did not use the word “male” until the second section of the Amendment, when it defined the basis of congressional representation as all persons, but added that “if states denied to male citizens over the age of 21 for any reason other than crime or participation in rebellion, then their congressional representation would be reduced proportionally.” *Id.*

10. The American Woman Suffrage Association reported that in Johnson County, two hundred black women had both registered and voted. *WOMAN’S J.*, Aug. 12, 1871.

11. JOHNSON, *supra* note 5, at 39–40.

12. JOHNSON, *supra* note 5, at 39–40.

Catt spent the money in two ways: first, she opened a second headquarters in Washington D.C., where a staff of full-time lobbyists based their campaign for the federal amendment.¹³ This was part of Catt's so-called "winning plan": to combine the fight for a federal amendment with strategic forays into the states most likely to vote for suffrage and ratify the amendment.

Secondly, Catt hired twenty-five publicists for a new and improved press bureau that created editorials, statistics, cartoons, and even silent movies, for a publicity blitz that she called an "education" campaign.¹⁴ She also allocated \$75,000 in the first year for a magazine which allowed them to control the narrative, or to "sauce back" their opponents as Anthony memorably said. She purchased the *Woman's Journal* and created the new *Woman Citizen*.¹⁵ The increased attention was further evident in the black press, where, for example, W.E.B. Du Bois published two symposia on woman's suffrage in the pages of *The Crisis*.¹⁶

However, the role of women of color within the movement was tenuous—not their own belief in suffrage nor their efforts but their ability to work within the white-dominated national and state organizations. Black women, including suffragist and club leader Mary Church Terrell, spoke at NAWSA meetings.¹⁷ In addition, white women sometimes spoke to black organizations.¹⁸ But these interactions were possible, not typical. Anthony and other white suffragists purposely asked blacks not to attend suffrage meetings if they thought it was politic.¹⁹ Leaders' efforts to form coalitions across race failed or faded.

That included an effort led by one of the movement's largest donors, Alva Vanderbilt Belmont, the outspoken New York society leader who contributed tens of thousands of dollars, beginning with paying for a new headquarters in New York City.²⁰ In January 1910, Belmont met with

13. JOHNSON, *supra* note 5, at 72–74.

14. JOHNSON, *supra* note 5, at 74–76.

15. JOHNSON, *supra* note 5, at 74–76.

16. *A Woman's Suffrage Symposium*, 4 THE CRISIS 240, 240–45 (Sept. 1912); *Votes for Women: A Symposium by Leading Thinkers of Colored America*, 10 THE CRISIS 178, 178–92 (Aug. 1915).

17. TERBORG-PENN, *supra* note 5, at 66.

18. *New York Age*, May 5, 1910.

19. For example, Sylvania Williams was president of the Phillis Wheatley Club of New Orleans but was not allowed to attend the NAWSA convention in 1903. TERBORG-PENN, *supra* note 5, at 91.

20. See generally PETER GEIDEL, ALVA E. BELMONT: A FORGOTTEN FEMINIST (Colum. Univ. 1993); SYLVIA HOFFERT, ALVA VANDERBILT BELMONT: UNLIKELY CHAMPION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS (Ind. Univ. Press 2012); JOHNSON, *supra* note 5, at 41–43, 50–51, 57–71.

three black suffragists, including Irene Moorman of the Negro Women's Business League, to discuss opening a black branch of the Political Equality Association (PEA) in Manhattan.²¹ According to Moorman, "Belmont welcomed us to her headquarters, 505 Fifth Avenue, and told me as organizer if I would organize a club of 100 she would give us headquarters."²² Moorman arranged a meeting at Mount Olivet Baptist Church, featuring Belmont as a speaker.²³

According to headlines in newspapers across the country, Belmont invited black women to join her organization, or even "invited negro women to join the 'Cause.'"²⁴ Black women—who were already suffragists, belonged to the Colored Women's Equal Suffrage League of Brooklyn, or were organized by Moorman—enrolled in her organization. Forty initially joined the new branch and Belmont kept her promise and opened a headquarters once the group reached over one hundred members.²⁵

Belmont's suffragism stemmed from her deep resentment that women got no respect and had no power without the vote. "Men have always kept

21. The three women were Irene Moorman Blackstone, Sarah Garnet, and Maria Lawton, a news reporter. Moorman was born in Virginia in 1875. She worked for the Metropolitan Mercantile and Realty Company and was President of the Negro Women's Business League, treasurer of the Empire Federation of Women's Clubs and on the board of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). She joined Garnet's Equal Suffrage league in December 1907. She supported Marcus Garvey, heading the New York UNIA Ladies Division in 1917. Garnet taught for forty-seven years and was the first black woman principal in the New York City public schools. She was head of the suffrage division at the NACW and sought equal pay for black teachers. She helped organize the anti-lynching event in 1892 featuring Ida B. Wells, which resulted in the organization of the Women's Loyal Union of New York and Brooklyn for anti-lynching work. JULIE GALLAGHER, *BLACK WOMEN AND POLITICS IN NEW YORK CITY* 3–34 (Univ. Ill. Press 2012); GOODIER & PASTORELLO, *supra* note 5, at 81–83; Susan Goodier, *Biographical Database of Black Women Suffragists: Biography of Irene Moorman Blackstone (1875-194?)*, in *WOMEN AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1600–2000* (Judy Tzu-Chun Wu & Rebecca Plant, eds., Alexander Street 2017); Susan Goodier, *Biographical Database of Black Woman Suffragists: Biography of Sarah Jane Smith Thompson Garnet, 1831–1911*, in *WOMEN AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1600–2000* (Judy Tzu-Chun Wu & Rebecca Plant, eds., Alexander Street 2017); W.A. Hunton, *Women's Clubs: Mrs. Sarah J. Garnett*, 2 *THE CRISIS* 224, 253 (1911).

22. N. Barnett Dodson, *Suffrage Association in Flourishing State*, *AFRO-AMERICAN*, Nov. 5, 1910, at 3.

23. *N.Y. TRIB.*, Jan. 19, 1916, at 7.

24. *Suffrage for All*, *WASH. BEE*, Feb. 12, 1910, at 1.

25. GEIDEL, *supra* note 20, at 237–38. Belmont then gave up the nine-branch headquarters, consolidating into one more lavish headquarters, perhaps due to running low on cash. *Id.*

women in subjection,” she argued.²⁶ Belmont was furious when her husband, William Vanderbilt, blatantly cheated on her. Claiming she “was one of the first women in America to dare to get a divorce from an influential man,”²⁷ she thought that armed with the vote, women could finally tell men, “You can’t take us and use us as you choose, throw us aside and expect us to submit without a protest. We have a right to live, a right to be respected.”²⁸ Because men were untrustworthy, she argued that women needed rights based in the law and legal standing as voters.²⁹ Belmont and other wealthy white women insisted that their class and race privilege did not insulate them from sex discrimination and tried to espouse a sisterhood in which the common experience of sexism would trump class or race difference. Suffrage, according to Belmont, “awakened among women of the wealthy class of this country a spirit of sisterhood and a desire to cooperate with the working members of their sex.”³⁰

Belmont thus supported the garment workers’ Shirtwaist Strike of 1909, in which mostly Eastern European Jewish and Italian Catholic immigrant women struck.³¹ Labor activists formed the Wage Earner’s Suffrage League just over a year later. Much as they appreciated her financial contributions, many workers did not trust Belmont and noted that they supported suffrage longer than she did. Belmont’s “assistance” was not the same as collaboration; Belmont wanted to do *for* them, rather than *with* them, a theme that marred relations between Belmont and other wealthy women and the working-class strikers.³²

26. JD Thomas, *Alva Belmont: Women as Dictators*, WORDS FROM US (Apr. 8, 2018), <https://wordsfrom.us/2018/04/women-as-dictators-1922/> [<https://perma.cc/EZ3P-ZWKV>].

27. *Id.*

28. Alva Belmont, *Women as Dictators*, LADIES HOME J. (Sept. 1922). Due to her enormous wealth, Belmont understood the potential power of money, and simultaneously, the lack of economic independence that many married women had, especially if they discovered that he “is spending part of his wages on another woman.” Allan L. Benson, *What Mrs. O.H.P. Belmont Thinks Women Would Do with Votes*, PEARSON’S MAG. 530, 534 (Oct. 1909).

29. See generally Mrs. Oliver H.P. Belmont, *Woman’s Right to Govern Herself*, 190 N. AM. REV. 664 (1909).

30. CHATTANOOGA DAILY TIMES, Nov. 10, 1914. Edith Hooker, a suffragist and birth control advocate from Maryland, explained that the “appeal for conscious sex loyalty” was meaningful for women who were discriminated against primarily because of sex, i.e. not because of class, religion, or color. JOHNSON, *supra* note 5, at 37.

31. JOHNSON, *supra* note 5, at 96–98.

32. NANCY SCHROM DYE, AS EQUALS AND AS SISTERS: FEMINISM, THE LABOR MOVEMENT, AND THE WOMEN’S TRADE UNION LEAGUE OF NEW YORK 88–109 (Univ. of Mo. Press 1980); NAN ENSTAD, LADIES OF LABOR, GIRLS OF ADVENTURE: WORKING WOMEN, POPULAR CULTURE, AND LABOR POLITICS AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY 84–

Belmont's anger at men did not resonate with black women. Both men and women attended the meeting at Mount Olivet,³³ and the resulting Men's and Women's Negro branch was the only PEA branch to include men in its title.³⁴ This suggests a disconnect between Belmont's anger with men and the tradition of black women fighting with black men for the race, even as they also sometimes fought against black men for gender equity.³⁵

Furthermore, black women supported suffrage because they understood that it was necessary for civil rights and a communal right, not just about individual freedom. Moorman's plea to white suffragists was based on equality and justice: "[D]on't do anything for us because we are colored men and women, but make it humanitarian because it is right, and remember, we are working for the good of all humanity regardless of color."³⁶

Like working class women, Moorman also wondered if they could trust Belmont.³⁷ Moorman asked her outright,

If she really thought colored women would be allowed to vote if the ballot privilege was conferred on them, as it is to the colored men of the South. She assured me that if it were made the law that women might vote, the right would not be denied them. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, she said, would be carried into effect.³⁸

160 (Colum. Univ. Press 1999); SUSAN A. GLENN, *DAUGHTERS OF THE SHUTTLE: LIFE AND LABOR IN THE IMMIGRANT GENERATION 167–206* (Cornell Univ. Press 1990); JOHNSON, *supra* note 5, at 79–107; ANNEISE ORLECK, *COMMON SENSE AND A LITTLE FIRE* 53–80 (Univ. of N.C. Press 1995).

33. *Suffrage for All*, *supra* note 24.

34. On black women's work with black men for civil rights even as they sought gender equality, see DEBORAH GRAY WHITE, *TOO HEAVY A LOAD: BLACK WOMEN IN DEFENSE OF THEMSELVES, 1894–1994* (W. W. Norton & Co. 1999); BARBARA RANSBY, *ELLA BAKER AND THE BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENT: A RADICAL DEMOCRATIC VISION* (Univ. of N.C. Press 2003).

35. Terborg-Penn and Goodier have also argued that black and white women had different motivations for seeking the vote. While white women often focused on financial independence and respect, black women saw the right to vote as a culmination of the Fifteenth Amendment and a tool for civil rights. Some white suffragists questioned whether black men supported woman suffrage. Terborg-Penn argued that white women's criticism was exaggerated and that black men did not oppose suffrage. GOODIER & PASTORELLO, *supra* note 5, at 72; TERBORGPENN, *supra* note 5, at 116–17.

36. N. Barnett Dodson, *Suffrage Association in Flourishing State*, *AFRO AMERICAN*, Nov. 5, 1910, at 3.

37. *Suffrage for Women*, *AFRO AMERICAN*, Feb. 19, 1910, at 7.

38. *Negro Women Join in Suffrage Fight*, *N.Y. TIMES*, Feb. 7, 1910, at 4.

While some blacks initially welcomed Belmont's outreach, ultimately Moorman's fear was prescient.³⁹ In fact, Belmont was not an ally they could depend on. She was nowhere to be found when newspapers reported that due to complaints from white members of the PEA, the black branch in New York was not allowed to attend a ball held for members, nor were blacks allowed to eat in its lunchroom.⁴⁰

Furthermore, when the virulently racist Kate Gordon formed the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference in 1914, Belmont donated \$1,000. Writing to Gordon, Belmont established her southern bona fides, despite having left the region fifty-five years earlier at the age of six. She wrote,

As a native of the South . . . , reared on Southern tradition, and loving the whole section below the Mason & Dixon line with the ardor peculiar to all the sons and daughters of the South, no matter to what remote parts of the earth they may journey, I am naturally interested in everything pertinent to its progress.

Two weeks later, Belmont surprised Gordon with an unsolicited check for \$10,000.⁴¹ Welcomed and feted at the Southern States conference held in Chattanooga that fall, when she was asked if votes for women would include black women, this time she replied,

As to that, I should not like to express an opinion. That is a problem that should be left entirely to the men of the south to decide. They will do what's just. We are after securing for women political rights

39. THE FREEMAN [Indianapolis] Feb. 19, 1910, at 3, reported that Mary Church Terrell was happy to hear about the report of the meeting with Belmont. W.E.B. Du Bois criticized Anna Howard Shaw and other white suffragists for saying they don't want to alienate South "despite the brave effort of women like Mrs. Belmont and Mrs. Villard, the war cry is rapidly becoming 'Votes for White Women Only.'" Editorial, *Forward Backward*, 2 THE CRISIS 243, 244 (Oct. 1911). But after the Chattanooga convention, Du Bois criticized Belmont for her answer to the question of whether black women would get the vote; he called it "facile" and "dishonest." Editorial, *Agility*, 9 THE CRISIS 129, 133 (Jan. 1915).

40. GEIDEL, *supra* note 20, at 157; DETROIT FREE PRESS, Apr. 8, 1911; N.Y. TRIBUNE, Aug. 31, 1911. Members of the public also objected when white educator Alice Dewey invited Mary Church Terrell to speak in her home. N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 22, Feb. 23, and Feb. 25, 1911.

41. Alva Belmont to Kate Gordon, March 20, 1914; Telegram from Kate Gordon to Alva Belmont (Apr. 6, 1914). Alva handwrote on the telegram, "This was to thank me for sending them ten thousand dollars. A. V. Belmont." See also Laura Clay to Belmont (Apr. 11, 1914); Alva Belmont to Laura Clay (Apr. 15, 1914); all in *National Woman's Party Papers, The Suffrage Years, 1913-1920*, Library of Congress, microfilm, Belmont Correspondence Scrapbook, reel 113.

equal to those of men. Negro women could share the rights of negro men. If they are disfranchised, let women share the same treatment.⁴²

Belmont was not interested in fighting for racial justice, but equal rights for women (now defined as white). She never actually saw black women as sisters—as humans—the way she tried to see immigrant working women.

Not surprisingly, black women organized their own suffrage clubs, including the Alpha Suffrage club, founded by Ida B. Wells-Barnett, the editor and anti-lynching activist, in Chicago in 1913.⁴³ It was as a delegate of the Alpha Suffrage Club that Wells-Barnett traveled to Washington D.C. in 1913 to participate in Alice Paul's parade. Wells-Barnett was shocked when the head of the Illinois delegation announced that Paul had decided that black women had to march at the back of the parade. She angrily refused, stating, "Either I go with you or not at all."⁴⁴

The delegation was divided. Virginia Brooks issued an impassioned plea to walk with Wells-Barnett: "I think that we should allow Mrs. Barnett to walk in our delegation. If the women of other states lack moral courage, we should show them that we are not afraid of public opinion. We stand by our principles."⁴⁵ Ultimately, however, the head of the Illinois delegation decided they should obey Paul's mandate. Incensed, Wells-Barnett disappeared, and the parade began without her. Standing in the crowd, she stepped out and joined the Illinois delegates midway through, rather than march at the back.⁴⁶ She wrote a white supporter, "I only required that our women should be as firm in standing up for their principles as the Southern women [and I would not limit this to Southern women] are for their prejudices."⁴⁷

42. CHATTANOOGA DAILY TIMES, Nov. 11, 1914, at 8. Belmont was referring to *white men of the south*. *Id.*

43. *See, e.g.*, BROAD AX, July 15, 1914, Sept. 12, 1914, Oct. 3, 1914, and Nov. 7, 1914. Weekly meetings featured the election commissioner and candidates and the club was in part responsible for electing Oscar de Priest as the first black alderman in Chicago.

44. CHICAGO TRIBUNE, Mar. 4, 1913, at 1.

45. *Id.*

46. CHICAGO TRIBUNE, Mar. 4, 1913, at 1. *See also* BROAD AX and CHICAGO DEFENDER, Mar. 8, 1913. According to the *Woman's Journal*, white women threatened not to march if black women did, but there is no evidence anyone followed through on this threat. WOMAN'S J., Mar. 15, 1913, at 87.

47. Letter from Ida B. Wells-Barnett to Catherine McCulloch, Mar. 15, 1913, in Catherine McCulloch Materials, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; copy provided to the author courtesy of Lori Osborne, Director, Frances Willard House Museum, Evanston, Illinois.

Anti-black racism thus infected the movement. White leaders like Belmont and Paul made a choice to side with southern white women who threatened the national organization at the height of their Lost Cause propaganda campaign. Stanton, Catt, and many others from *both* North and South argued that white women deserved the right to vote rather than ignorant foreigners or former slaves. Many had no understanding of intersectionality, and they had little communication or friendship with black women; sisterhood did not extend across race. These problems continue. Speaking about white feminists today, the activist Rachel Cargle said recently, “If the goal of your feminism is to get equal power with white men, you’re going to have to oppress a bunch of people.”⁴⁸

Therefore, when the amendment passed in 1920, a question emerged that is of central importance to us here today is: Who actually got the vote? Across the South, black women lined up to register, only to be turned away by the same white registrars who disfranchised their fathers and husbands. While thousands succeeded in registering in some cities, including Atlanta, only four out of six hundred black women were allowed to register in Shreveport, Louisiana.⁴⁹

Black women asked white women to stand up for them. When they formed a new interracial coalition in 1920 in the South, as part of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), a white woman watered down the black women’s statement, including deleting their resolution in favor of suffrage.⁵⁰ Outraged, South Carolina clubwoman and suffragist Marion Wilkinson sent the uncensored statement to the white members of the state CIC, “letting them know that it is the expression of the sentiments of the colored women of the South.”⁵¹ Black women ultimately published an edited version that asked white women to “indicate their sanction of the ballot for all citizens”⁵²

48. Marisa Meltzer, *I Refuse to Listen to White Women Cry*, WASH. POST (Sept. 11, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/magazine/wp/2019/09/11/feature/how-activist-rachel-cargle-built-a-business-by-calling-out-racial-injustices-within-feminism/> [https://perma.cc/6A3Z-LBK9]

49. Liette Gidlow, *The Sequel: The Fifteenth Amendment, the Nineteenth Amendment, and Southern Black Women’s Struggle to Vote*, THE J. OF THE GILDED AGE AND PROGRESSIVE ERA 433–49 (2018); TERBORG-PENN, *supra* note 5.

50. Carrie Parks Johnson weakened a preface against lynching, deleted a preamble demanding for black women “all the privileges and rights granted to American womanhood.” JOAN MARIE JOHNSON, SOUTHERN LADIES, NEW WOMEN: RACE, REGION, AND CLUBWOMEN 71–74 (2007).

51. *Id.* at 82.

52. *Id.* at 81–82; *Southern Women and Race Co-Operation*, WOMEN’S MISSIONARY COUNCIL, COMMISSION ON INTERRACIAL COOPERATION (CIC) PAPERS, microfilm, reel 14.

Black women also tried, to no avail, to get the National Woman's Party (NWP), Alice Paul's organization, to support them. In 1921, they appealed to Paul to allow them to address the NWP convention on the subject of black women being denied the right to vote in the southern states. Paul refused; this was a race, not a women's issue, she argued.⁵³

For other women of color, a key question in 1920 was whether they were eligible for citizenship and therefore to vote. Many Mexican-Americans living in New Mexico, Texas, and California were citizens, in part due to the treaty that ended the Mexican-American War. For example, Adelina Otero Warren, the first Latina to run for congress in 1922, had headed the New Mexico branch of the NWP.⁵⁴

However, Asian immigrants were subject to naturalization law from 1790, which specified that they were "aliens ineligible to citizenship" because they were not "free white persons." Mabel Lee, a New York suffragist born in China, advocated for the right to vote because it is "the application of democracy to women."⁵⁵ Despite her activism, she could not register to vote in 1920; historians do not know whether she ever naturalized and voted after 1943 when Chinese Americans were allowed to naturalize.⁵⁶ Native Americans did not become citizens until 1924 unless they were part of the allotment process under the Dawes Act, and Puerto Rican women had to fight for the right to vote until 1929 (even then there was a literacy requirement).

Jennie Moton and Margaret Murray Washington added language toning down the suffrage paragraph by suggesting the vote was an orderly and nonviolent way for blacks to protect themselves. See the original draft typescript with annotations, CIC PAPERS, reel 20.

53. Addie Hunton, a YWCA leader and NAACP Vice president, Mary Talbert, a New York clubwoman, and Mary White Ovington, a white leader of the NAACP, all pushed Paul. Paul also told Florence Kelley she was concerned about offending Southern white women; the North Carolina delegation (white) hesitated to attend and then would not take part in the ceremonial dinner because they refused to eat with black women. See generally *How did the National Woman's Party Address the Issue of the Enfranchisement of Black Women, 1919–1924?*, in *WOMEN AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1600–2000*, <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com> [<https://perma.cc/7Q5P-NGL3>].

54. See generally VICKI RUÍZ & VIRGINIA SÁNCHEZ KORROL, *LATINA LEGACIES: IDENTITY, BIOGRAPHY, AND COMMUNITY* (2005).

55. Mabel Lee, *The Meaning of Woman Suffrage*, 526 *CHINESE STUDENT MONTHLY* (May 1914).

56. There were limited numbers of second-generation Chinese or Japanese Americans with birthright citizenship in the early 1900s. *Id.* A transcribed version of this article and biographical information is available on Tim Tseng, Ph.D., *Asian American Legacy: Dr. Mabel Lee*, <https://timtseng.net/2013/12/12/asian-american-legacy-dr-mable-lee/> (retrieved Sept. 11, 2019). Japanese Americans were not allowed to naturalize until 1952 with the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act.

And who still needs access to vote now? In the face of increasing voter suppression, especially aimed at black and brown people, we need continued work for voting as a right, not a privilege, as a matter of justice, as Lottie Rollin said, “[a]s a right based on the grounds that we are human beings, and as such entitled to all human rights.”⁵⁷

57. Gatewood, *supra* note 8, at 184.