

Centennial of Suffrage B1



Suffragists protesting about President Woodrow Wilson's opposition to women's suffrage. Chicago, 1916.

The right to vote didn't mean equal rights. A Women's Liberation march in Washington, D.C., 1970.

© Library of Congress

© Warren K. Leffler/Library of Congress

In 2020, the United States is celebrating 100 years of women's suffrage.



In 1920, almost 150 years after the United States declared that “all men are created equal,” American women got the right to vote... 27 years after women in New Zealand did. American suffragists worked for almost 80 years to obtain that right. As is often the case in the United States, the movement progressed state by state

before arriving at the national level. In 1869, the state of Wyoming became the first in America where women could vote. A dozen other states, most of them in the West, followed over the years.

Seneca Falls Convention

The first formal demand for women's suffrage came in 1848, after the Seneca Falls Convention. The Convention was a public meeting to discuss women's rights in general, not just voting rights. Participants at the Convention passed a resolution in support of women's suffrage... even though some of the organizers objected: they thought the idea was too radical! But the participants were right: just a few years after their famous resolution, the principle of women's suffrage was defended by everyone in America who believed in equality.

Susan B. Anthony

Susan B. Anthony was the face of the suffrage movement. Before the Civil War, she was an anti-slavery militant. In 1869 (four years after slavery ended in America), Anthony co-founded the National Woman Suffrage Association.

In 1872, Anthony voted in New York state, but then she was arrested by the police. Newspaper articles about her arrest were excellent publicity for her cause.



Susan B. Anthony (right)

Nineteenth Amendment

Anthony died in 1906, so she didn't live long enough to see her dream come true. But a few months before she died, she said, “Failure is impossible.” And she was right: in 1920, the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution was adopted. It says, “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied (...) on account of sex.” That amendment is sometimes called the Susan B. Anthony amendment in her honour. And in 1979, Anthony became the first woman to have her portrait on U.S. money.

Help

failure (n) opposite of success
on account of (prep) because of

Portrait of Persistence

In 2020, 100 years after the amendment was adopted, museums, theatres, schools and other institutions across the country are honouring women's suffrage and the women who worked for it. The National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. has a show called "Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence." It displays portraits and biographies of important suffragists, people and organisations.

One of them is Ida B. Wells (1862-1931), a black woman journalist, teacher and activist. She worked for equality for everyone, but especially African-American women. Their rights were often ignored, by black men and white women. In 1909, Wells co-founded the NAACP, the largest civil-rights organisation in the U.S.A. In her time, Ida B. Wells was considered the "most famous black woman in America."

Women of the Year

Time magazine did a project called "100 Women of the Year." The magazine is famous for their annual "Man of the Year" selection... They didn't change that title to "Person of the Year" until 1999, and they have only had 11 women as "Person of the Year." So in honour of the centennial of suffrage, they named 100 Women of the Year, one for every year from 1920 to 2019 – from the suffragists to Greta Thunberg. ■



IDA B. WELLS.

Help

the **NAACP** (acronym) the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People