



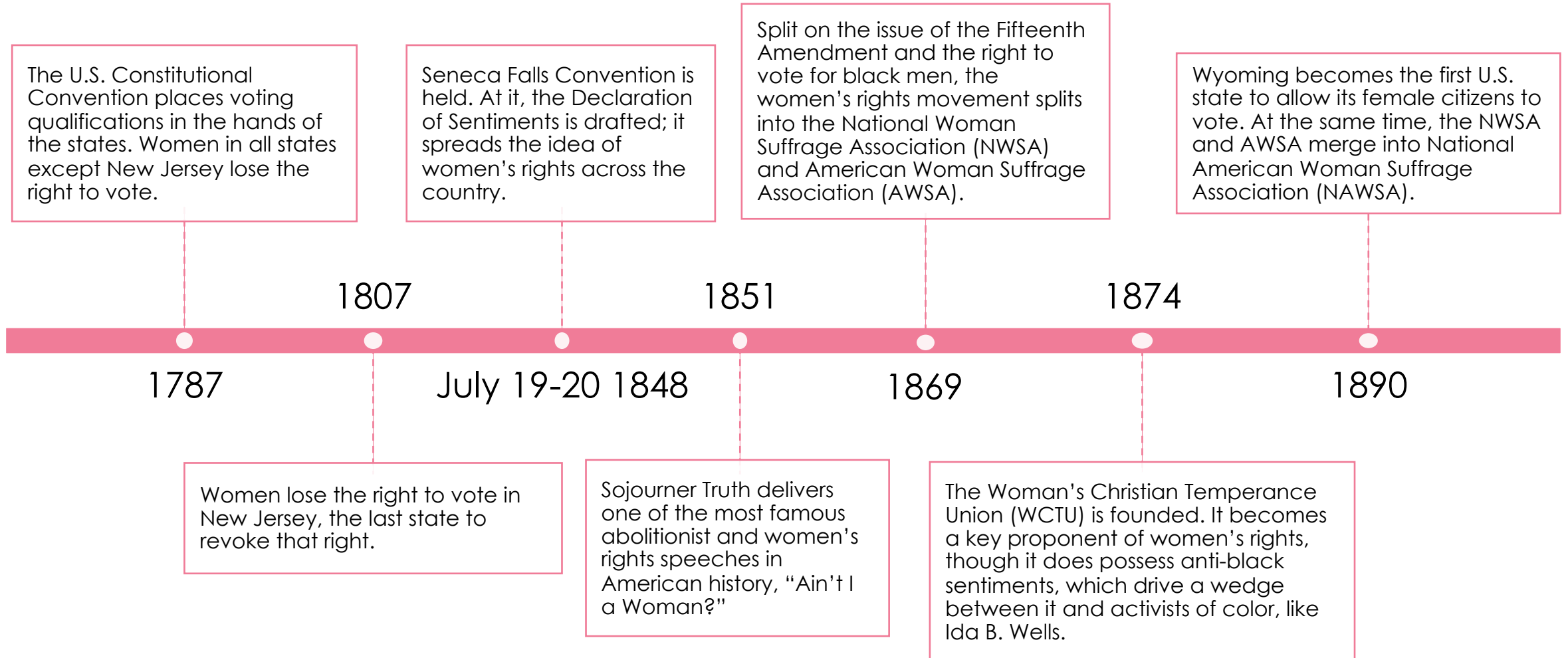
*Women's
Museum of
California
Presents*

THE AMERICAN
WOMEN'S
SUFFRAGE
MOVEMENT:
A LESSON PLAN

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Timeline: 1700s-1800s



Timeline: Early 1900s

The first large scale suffrage parade is held in New York City by the Women's Political Union. Chinese-American activist Mabel Ping-Hua Lee stands at the front of the parade.

The Alpha Suffrage Club is founded, with Ida B. Wells as one of the co-founders and leaders; it is believed to be the first African-American women's suffrage association. A massive suffrage parade is also held in Washington D.C. the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration.

The 19th Amendment is signed into law after Tennessee becomes the 36th and final needed state to ratify.

1910

1911

1913

June 4, 1919

1920

1921

Clara Chan Lee and Emma Tom Leung are the first women to register to vote in California and the first Chinese-American women to register to vote in the United States.

By joint resolution, Congress approved the women's suffrage amendment and sent it to the states for ratification.

Alice Paul authors the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA); from here, the struggle for women's rights continues to evolve.

Timeline: Beyond 1920

The Indian Citizenship Act grants citizenship to every Native American born in the United States, per the 14th amendment. This should have guaranteed suffrage, but some states still barred Native Americans from voting until 1957.

The Chinese Exclusion Act which had barred Mabel Ping-Hua Lee and several other Chinese-Americans from participating in American society because they could not become naturalized citizens. After the repeal, Chinese immigrants could become naturalized and finally vote.

The 26th amendment grants the right to vote to every citizen in the United States aged eighteen or older.

Mississippi becomes the last state to ratify the 19th amendment.

1911

1965

1972

1924

1943

1971

1984

Clara Chan Lee and Emma Tom Leung are the first women to register to vote in California and the first Chinese-American women to register to vote in the United States.

Another piece of legislation is signed into law, the Voting Rights Act. Infused with the ideals of and made to address the complaints of the civil rights movement, this act offers provisions to ensure the 14th and 15th amendments will be enforced, particularly for minorities.

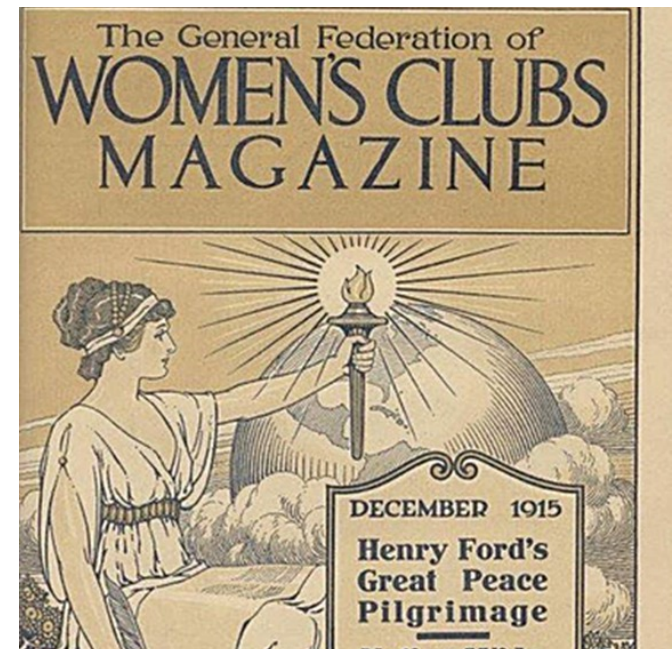
The ERA passes both houses of the legislature after nearly 50 years, but in 1982, the deadline passes for ratification, just three states short, so the ERA never becomes part of the constitution.

The Basics

- In 1787, the Constitutional Convention does not affirm the right of women to vote.
 - The issue languishes in obscurity until the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, the first women's rights convention.
 - In 1851, the movement truly kicks off when Sojourner Truth delivers her seminal speech on abolitionism and women's rights, "Ain't I a Woman?" at a Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio.
- As outlined in the timeline, the American Women's Suffrage Movement began alongside the Abolitionist Movement, but over time the two went in different directions.
 - Eventually, this culminated in the women's rights movement splitting into two organizations: the NWSA, which opposed the Fifteenth Amendment, insisting that rights be given to women and black men at the same time, and into AWSA, which supported the Fifteenth Amendment. The two remained split for 20 years before becoming NAWSA.
- When the movement entered the twentieth century, it began to seriously pick up steam.
 - By 1910, large scale women's suffrage parades were being conducted, with the greatest being in New York City.
 - Women's clubs become more influential. Following the example of Ida B. Wells and her Alpha Suffrage Club, African American women start women's clubs all their own to advocate for change.
 - In 1919, Congress finally approves the 19th amendment. It is ratified in 1920.
- Once suffrage is gained, the movement splinters, with some activists seeking further change and other content with the 19th amendment alone.

On the Importance of Clubs

- A key component that helped women organize themselves to campaign for suffrage was clubs, where women would gather to discuss their lives and eventually their need for political change.
- Many of these clubs were dominated by upper middle-class, educated, Northern women, but there were also many clubs run by African-American women that were fearless advocates for suffrage.
- For more on this topic, please look at [this article](#) from our museum.





Suffrage Today

- More than 100 years since the 19th amendment was ratified, voting rights continue to be a massive political issue.
- Today, policies of voter suppression aimed to target minorities are protested against using the same tactics as the American women's suffrage movement.
- Just as it was then, the idea of suffrage sparks questions like:
 - What does it mean to vote? How should votes be counted? How can we ensure everyone can vote?
- The timeline in this presentation is incomplete until all these questions can be answered and suffrage extends to everyone in the United States.





The Fight for Women's Rights Continues On...

- When teaching students about the suffragist movement, consider touching on how the fight for women's rights has continued through the years alongside the continued struggle for universal suffrage.
- Our museum has many resources to help demonstrate how the legacy of women's rights lives on, particularly our digital exhibit, [Marching Towards Empowerment: Beyond Suffrage.](#)



Discussion Questions

Drawing Comparisons with Modern Protest Movements

- How does the suffragist movement compare to modern political movements? What similarities are there?
- Can we use strategies that the suffragists pioneered, like women's clubs, to enact political change today?
- What would the suffragist movement look like if it happened today?

What Does Empowerment Mean

- After gaining suffrage, many suffragists diverged on what to do next. Some, like Alice Paul, supported the Equal Rights Amendment and a push for greater empowerment. Others thought their work was done. Which path would you have chosen?
- When thinking about that question, consider what 'empowerment' really means. What does it look like?



*Asking Some
Hard
Questions*

For all that the American suffragist Movement was a place for people to come together, it also has a complicated history with other civil rights campaigns, particularly those focused on African-Americans. That history should be learned too.



Spotlight:

*Women of Color in the
American Suffrage
Movement*



Sojourner Truth

"THEN THAT LITTLE MAN IN BLACK THERE, HE SAYS WOMEN CAN'T HAVE AS MUCH RIGHTS AS MEN, 'CAUSE CHRIST WASN'T A WOMAN! WHERE DID YOUR CHRIST COME FROM? FROM GOD AND A WOMAN! MAN HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH HIM."

- **When:** 1797-1883
- **Where:** New York, then the United States
- **Who:** Perhaps no other figure shaped both the abolitionist and women's rights movements as much as Truth. Her 1851 speech at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention, "[Ain't I a Woman?](#)" (later rewritten to sound more Southern since Truth was from New York), became a major touchstone for both movements. Her whole life was spent fighting for both causes and reminding society of the intersectionality present in black women, as they face oppression from many directions.



Ida B. Wells

"THE WAY TO RIGHT WRONGS IS TO TURN THE LIGHT OF THE TRUTH ON THEM."

- **When:** 1862-1931
- **Where:** Tennessee, then the United States, then the world
- **Who:** Born a slave, Wells later became one of the most important African American figures in the American women's Suffrage movement. She was also one of the most outspoken figures against lynching. Never afraid to point out the racism present in the words and actions of her fellow white suffragists, Wells was always a much-needed voice that called for change and equity. She was present for the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), though she was not credited as a founder.



Mabel Ping-Hua Lee

“FOR NO NATION CAN EVER MAKE REAL AND LASTING PROGRESS IN CIVILIZATION UNLESS ITS WOMEN ARE FOLLOWING CLOSE TO ITS MEN, IF NOT ACTUALLY ABREAST WITH THEM.”

- **When:** 1896-1966
- **Where:** New York City
- **Who:** Born in Guangzhou, China, but a resident of New York City since she was five years old, Lee experienced prejudice both on account of her gender and race, since Chinese immigrants were then ‘excluded’ and not allowed to become citizens. In 1912, after the Chinese Republican revolution gave the vote to women, white suffragist leaders in New York invited Lee, then only sixteen, to ride at the head of their parade up 5th Avenue. After this, Lee continued to speak out about suffrage and Chinese-American rights.



Lydia Flood Jackson

“WHO CAN BREAK THROUGH A PHALANX OF DETERMINED,
NOBLE-MINDED, UPRIGHT WOMEN, BACKED BY THE POWER
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?”

- **When:** 1862-1963
- **Where:** Oakland, California
- **Who:** Jackson was an activist and clubwoman who campaigned for both civil rights and women's rights in her hometown and across Latin America, including the Caribbean. She was the first legislative chair and first citizenship chair of the California Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. Everywhere she went, she advocated for her fellow women to challenge white male supremacy, a fight that continues today.



Maria Guadalupe Evangelina de Lopez

- **When:** 1881-1977
- **Where:** Los Angeles, California
- **Who:** On October 3, 1911, Lopez, the youngest female teacher hired by UCLA (and perhaps the first Latina), gave a speech in Los Angeles Plaza that was entirely in Spanish, which was unprecedented at the time. Throughout the 1910s, she worked to increase Hispanic women's involvement in the suffragist movement by translating suffrage materials into Spanish, authoring opinion pieces for newspapers, attending club meetings, and giving landmark speeches.

Clara Chan Lee and Emma Tom Leung



- **When:** 1911
- **Where:** Alameda County, California
- **Who:** Lee (pictured right), along with her best friend, Leung (pictured left), were the first Chinese American women to register to vote in the whole of the United States after California made it legal barely two months before. After this, Lee went on to found the Chinese Women's Jeleab (Self-Reliance) Association, an advocacy group and social club for Chinese women in the Bay Area, and was active in other women's clubs, including the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

Discussion Questions

Civil Rights

- How can we reconcile the American women's suffragist movement with other civil rights movements?
- How can we see legacy of the suffragist movement today?

How History Is Told

- Why are some suffragist stories told and others are not?
- How much did you know about suffragists of color before this presentation?

The Many Ways to Affect Change

- Throughout this presentation, we have seen women doing many different things to support the suffrage movement; what do you think is the most and least effective?

**"A FEARLESS INDOMITABLE
WOMANHOOD
A FEARLESS INDOMITABLE
RACE."**

WILLIAM ROONEY.



Women Under California Laws

By Alice L. Park.

1910

Fathers sole guardians.
One of the most unjust and unreasonable laws that California imposes upon women, is the one making fathers sole guardians or custodians of minor children. The care, custody, control, education and services of minor children belong legally to the father alone if parents live together. A legitimate child has but one parent, a father.
Illegitimate children are under the control of the mother.
A man can no longer will away his unborn child in any state. A child's inheritance of money has been provided for, and the courts appoint a property guardian. This must not be confused with legal guardianship. The father is sole custodian.
Court decisions are often reported where young children have been given by the court to the mother. This does not prove that the mother has a legal share in the custody of her children prior to the decision. That when a family is torn to pieces, the judge awards

Use Our Digital Exhibits!

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