

The U.S. Women's Suffrage Movement: A Progressive Era Response

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Hofstadter, Richard. *The Age of Reform*. New York: Vintage Books, 1955.

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ABSTRAKT

Společnost v průběhu progresivní éry čelila mnohým změnám a zmocňoval se jí pocit, že ztrácí kontrolu. Mnoho žen věřilo, že je jejich povinností vyčistit společnost od příkoří industrializace a urbanizace, jakým byla např. dětská práce, skrze různá hnutí, kluby nebo odbory. Brzy si uvědomily, že jejich vliv byl omezený a došly k závěru, že řešením by mohlo být ženské volební právo, které by jim poskytlo příležitost ovlivnit společnost a aktivně vstoupit do politiky. V průběhu progresivní éry se myšlenka důležitosti volebního práva rozšířila mezi ženy ze všech společenských tříd, které začaly spolupracovat s cílem obdržení volebního práva. Ženy chtěly získat kontrolu nad svými životy a jejich úsilí nepolevilo ani v průběhu I. světové války, když se staly zásadní pracovní silou nejen v Americe, ale také v armádě. Ženy získaly volební právo roku 1920.

Klíčová slova: ženy, ženské volební právo, společnost, progresivní éra, volební právo, Devatenáctý dodatek Ústavy Spojených států

ABSTRACT

Society in the Progressive Era had to face many changes and felt like it was losing control. Many women believed it was their duty to clean society from the evils of industrialization and urbanization, such as child labor, via various clubs, settlement movements or even unions. They soon realized that their power to influence events was limited and came to the conclusion that the solution might be women's enfranchisement, as it would give them the opportunity to truly make a difference in society and actively enter politics. In the Progressive Era, the importance of suffrage spread among women of all social classes who started cooperating in order to win the vote. Women wished to gain control over their lives and continued their efforts even during World War I, when they became an important workforce in America, and also in the military. Women finally won the vote in 1920.

Keywords: women, women's suffrage, society, Progressive Era, progressives, suffrage, enfranchisement, the Nineteenth Amendment, clubwomen, social work

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INTRODUCTION

The lives of people in the Progressive Era started changing and so did the face of America which was greatly influenced by both industrialization and urbanization. Urban societies changed as foreign immigrants and also people from rural areas moved there. This was connected with a number of issues, such as living conditions of the immigrants, which were often horrible. Industrialization introduced issues such as extensive child labor and bad working conditions of manual laborers. Women started noticing changes in the American society and felt it to be their responsibility to clean it as they would their own households. Women all over the country established clubs which focused mainly on self-education in areas such as literature or history. During the Progressive Era, most of these clubs changed their focus on society. One of the issues women dealt with were working conditions of female workers since more women entered various types of employment. However, unlike men, women working in factories were not permitted to become part of male unions and therefore had no protection and help whatsoever. This situation changed once upper and middle-class women founded NWTUL to support these women and fought hard for better conditions in factories and higher wages. Women's union managed to bring together women from various classes to support and understand one another. Another issue which women found crucial was child labor so they tried to ban it. Not only because they cared for children as such, but also because they wished to protect future American citizens. Female reformers established settlement houses to support immigrants in poor neighborhoods. One of the main figures was suffragist Jane Addams and her Hull House. This movement was truly influential since it dealt with better housing, tried to improve schools, offered libraries, public kitchens or even swimming pools.

Women managed to achieve a great number of successes, however they were still limited and began to realize that. They were not able to influence American society or even politics as much as they felt to be necessary since they could not vote and actively enter politics themselves. Since the country was run by men who focused on different types of issues and had different priorities, women could never change the course of society as much as they needed to. Therefore, they started to fight for their enfranchisement and pressured the government to grant women the right to vote, in which they succeeded in achieving on August 18, 1920.

1 THE PROGRESSIVE ERA AS A TIME OF CHANGE

The Progressive Era (1890s – 1920s) can be viewed as a reaction to a great number of problems that occurred in American society during the Gilded Age.¹ In the 1860s, following the Civil War, the United States became a global leader when its population of 63 million embraced industrialization and urbanization as key to post-war recovery.² Both of these were connected with a great migration from rural areas to cities which offered better employment opportunities. This not only changed rural areas but had a great impact on both cities and their inhabitants. However, the urban newcomers often experienced a significant decrease in their quality of life.³ In addition, the United States experienced increased immigration, especially from eastern and southern Europe, which made the cities even more crowded and competitive.

Between 1900 and 1915, 15 million immigrants arrived in the United States. Almost 75 percent of the population of New York City was immigrant or first generation American.⁴ Their final destinations were often large cities, which seemingly offered better opportunities. Many of the newcomers arrived in the United States with the intention to earn money and return back home. Often, they were not part of the poorest social class since they needed financial means to emigrate.⁵ Nonetheless, many of them spent much of their savings to emigrate, only to have their expectations lowered or completely dashed once they reached America.

Among reasons for their struggles, they rarely spoke English and were often insufficiently skilled. Still, some managed to open shops, ethnic groceries or bakeries.⁶ However, most newcomers soon found themselves impoverished, living in urban tenements, frequently without direct sun or indoor plumbing. Diseases in these tenements flourished, resulting in high death rates. Poor working conditions, often in factories with few or no

¹ John E. Hansan, "The Progressive Era," Social Welfare, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/eras/progressive-era/>.

² Lewis L. Gould, *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1914* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), 3.

³ Library of Congress, "Cities during the Progressive Era," accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/progress/cities/>.

⁴ Library of Congress, "Immigrants in the Progressive Era," accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/progress/immigrant/>.

⁵ Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 76-77.

safety standards, only compounded their troubles.⁷ It was also difficult for many of them to adjust to a new lifestyle and culture that often greatly differed from their own. Their assimilation was not rapid, hampered not only by their desire to maintain their own culture but often by religion (many of the immigrants in the late-nineteenth century were Catholic or Jewish, while most Americans were Protestant).⁸ Another deterrent to assimilation was that many of the foreigners also simply could not afford to send their children to schools for they needed them to work. Those who could afford it oftentimes sent their children to private schools where education was provided in their native language. The “new immigrants” from eastern and southern Europe were also usually perceived as different by Americans, who considered Western Europe closer to their own values.⁹

Problems of living in cities were often connected with corruption. As a result of more jobs to be had in cities, they became overcrowded. Living in cities was not only connected with better opportunities, but often also with tougher living conditions. The more people that entered the cities, the more obvious it was that most of the cities were missing such essential services as sewers, adequate transportation, fresh and clean water.¹⁰ However, rather than focusing on solving issues which would improve city life, local governments often focused on protection of manufacturers, since the economic stability of the cities depended on them.¹¹ On the other hand, city governments were also frequently corrupt. Among other problems, most of the public services were mostly performed by private commercial companies.¹² The common practice was that a company received a monopoly over the service they provided. This contract usually lasted for twenty years. It granted the company the right to decide where and how those services would be provided and how much the fee would be for it. The government received a payment for granting such rights

⁶ Diner, *A Very Different Age*, 84.

⁷ Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivism, 1890s-1920s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17.

⁸ Diner, *A Very Different Age*, 86-87.

⁹ Clarence Robert, Jr., “Immigration into an Urban Industrialized Northeast: 1879-1914“, Yale, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1988/2/88.02.03.x.html>.

¹⁰ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 13.

¹¹ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 13.

¹² Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 25.

to companies.¹³ As a result, “essential services became the playthings of private profit, and busy people paid the price of danger, dirt, and disease.”¹⁴

City governments often lost control over many fundamental areas of public life in return for a payment from companies, with usually kickbacks to officials.¹⁵ As a consequence of such deals, poor neighborhoods were generally lacking even basic services such as garbage collection, for building owners often refused to pay for it. Such conditions only helped diseases to spread more quickly. Bribing was also frequent when an enterprise needed votes against some legislation.¹⁶ In addition, another problem was that only white males could vote. Not only that their life or business interests differed, male voters often also competed among one another. This made it difficult for the members of the city government to balance their demands.¹⁷

The American society experienced changes in values during the Progressive Era. Journalist, known as muckrakers, began exploring and publicly exposing government and corporate corruption.¹⁸ They also turned their attention towards illegal practices in various spheres of business or poor living conditions in cities. The idea of investigative journalism was not new. What distinguished muckraking journalists was the reach of their work, whether books or articles, which was now on a national level.¹⁹ The muckrakers managed to strengthen the feeling of personal responsibility. As historian Richard Hofstadter concluded, “the more the muckrakers acquainted the Protestant Yankee with what was going on around him, the more guilty and troubled he felt.”²⁰

Among significant social changes during the Progressive Era was the emergence of a middle class. This class was further divided into two broad sections: those who focused on agriculture, business and also labor, and those who worked in professional fields, such as law, medicine, architecture, economics, etc. Members of certain professions often shared similar experience or values, which led to mutual understanding and encouragement. What

¹³ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 13.

¹⁴ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 13.

¹⁵ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 25-26.

¹⁶ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 27.

¹⁷ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 80-81.

¹⁸ Gould, *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1914*, 28.

¹⁹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 187.

²⁰ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 205.

these categories had in common was awareness of the importance, of their skills.²¹ The rise of the middle class was also connected with the need for education reforms since the traditional system no longer satisfied the needs of markets and society. Education increasingly became a necessary part of upbringing and social transformation.²² Universities naturally also gained in importance since the professions of the stronger middle class required deeper knowledge.

Many Progressives abandoned the idea that people who were unemployed or poor were responsible for their conditions themselves since American society was partially built on individual responsibility. Therefore, they needed to convince society that their democracy lacked a social dimension.²³ As historian Robert Wiebe concluded, “they had enough insight into their lives to recognize that the old ways and old values would no longer suffice.”²⁴

Some members of the Progressive movement believed that a socially-just state could be achieved by democratic debates at the national level and pursuing politicians to pay attention to social issues.²⁵ The Progressive Era led many Americans to deal with social issues.

²¹ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 112.

²² Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 157.

²³ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 33.

²⁴ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 132.

²⁵ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 34.

2 FEMALE WORKERS

Economics in the Progressive Era was partly influenced by social Darwinism. Accordingly, the economic process should be rid of workers who were unfit and therefore should be “unemployable.” Based on this, women were often seen as unfit for work, because working outside the house might threaten their morals and also health.²⁶ Nonetheless, the number of women who were employed rose from 2.6 million in 1880 to 8.6 million in 1900.²⁷ This number mostly excludes middle-class, white women who seldom worked outside their homes. The majority of female workers were young, unmarried or widows.²⁸ Some men feared that their jobs might be “stolen” by women, but women usually took positions in newly created jobs with scarce possibilities for promotion. They worked as secretaries, stenographers, or telephone operators.²⁹ Women working became common, which made their position easier. It was no longer something to be ashamed of or considered inappropriate in most cases. The majority of women worked because they had to and sometimes viewed themselves as rather temporary workers until they married. Some women started volunteering. Naturally, most women sought positions with better working conditions and a slightly higher status. For example, working as a secretary was considered more prestigious than working in the factory.³⁰ However, not all women were forced to work by circumstances; some chose to. As more women attended college, they often decided to try their luck and pursue a career, explore their prospects and get married afterwards. They saw this as a chance for liberation and independence. Often under influence from their professors, young women were told that as educated women it is their duty to contribute to society. Nevertheless, many well-situated college-educated women chose not to work and married instead, based on the theory that a higher education would allow them to be both better wives and mothers.³¹

²⁶ Thomas C. Leonard, “Protecting Family and Race: The Progressive Case for Regulating Women's Work,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 64, no. 3 (2005): 757-59.

²⁷ Hansan, “The Progressive Era.”

²⁸ The National Women's History Museum, “The Status of Women in the Progressive Era,” accessed March 6, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/statuswomenprogressive.html>.

²⁹ Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era: 1900-1920* (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 15.

³⁰ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 54.

³¹ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 52-53.

The employment of women in the Progressive Era brought members of different classes together. More women also became college-educated and saw that women could not reach the same earnings as men or work in managerial functions, though they were educated and sometimes more capable. Though women “gained the right to control their earnings, own property, and, in the case of divorce, take custody of their children,”³² they could not fully gain control over their own lives and were far from being equal with men. Women became a considerable economical force, yet their working conditions in general were worse than those of men. A number of women came to the conclusion that the solution to their situation would be suffrage, which would afford them a chance to make a difference and obtain power to influence their lives.

Pink collar work was by many women considered the most prestigious employment possibility. These women were usually white, protestant, young and single and often worked as clerical workers or secretaries.³³ Single, young and preferably attractive women were a popular choice for employment in the office. Women were considered to be more patient and careful, and could be paid less than men since they had no children to support. They were also viewed as easily replaceable, for the job often was not highly demanding.³⁴ However, being a private secretary was different. The job was more diverse and respected among women. It also offered a higher degree of personal freedom. Nonetheless, their male bosses often treated these female employees with disrespect and expected the same services and care as they got at home. Again, even though their knowledge of companies may have been better than their bosses’, they basically did not have a chance to be promoted. On the other hand, clerical workers were significantly better paid than women working in factories or shops.³⁵ To improve their prospects, women started to try to improve their education, and more women entered the university or took courses to improve their skills and abilities

³² Library of Congress, “Women’s Suffrage in the Progressive Era,” accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/progress/suffrage/>.

³³ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 74.

³⁴ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 74.

³⁵ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 75.

in order to become a clerical worker.³⁶ This sort of job was interesting for women from different classes and offered a chance to interact.³⁷

The situation was different for women who were members of the middle or upper class who worked because they chose to. Naturally, given their financial situation, they had more possibilities and opportunities. They often chose to work in an economic field, medicine or journalism.³⁸ However, they had to fight stereotypes; “in the professions that they entered in increasing numbers, they had to battle the usual societal disapproval, sexual harassment, inequitable status, and pay and gender discrimination.”³⁹ Based on old Victorian values, women were perceived as too mentally fragile to be well educated and troubled by issues such as politics and should rather rest than work physically for they were too delicate.⁴⁰ Women who were educated, confident and often doing clerical work were oftentimes referred to as the “New Woman” who represented the exact opposite of the Victorian perception of the helpless woman.⁴¹ Such a woman, notes Molly Wood, was “young, well educated, probably a college graduate, independent of spirit, highly competent, and physically strong and fearless.”⁴²

Though women were in general offered less dangerous jobs, many of them worked in factories.⁴³ They canned food, made artificial flowers, worked in tobacco factories. However, the conditions in factories were most frequently horrible. Women worked long hours in generally unsafe conditions. This was a big problem especially in cotton mills, where poor ventilation oftentimes led to respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis or pneumonia. However, women usually preferred this kind of job to, for example, working as servants. The working conditions were mostly much better in households, but the wages were even lower.⁴⁴ Rather infamous for treating its workers was the textile industry. For

³⁶ Iva Plháčková, “The New American Woman and the Emergence of a Social Conscience in the Progressive Era” (MA thesis, Masaryk University, 2011), 12.

³⁷ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 76.

³⁸ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 77.

³⁹ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 77.

⁴⁰ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 77.

⁴¹ Plháčková, “The New American Woman”, 7-8.

⁴² Molly M. Wood, “Who Was the New Woman and What Did She Want?,” review of *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women’s Movement in America, 1875-1930, Humanities and Social Sciences*, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=9048>.

⁴³ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 18.

⁴⁴ Harvey Green, *Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 91.

example in sewing factories, in order to keep their jobs, women sometimes had to rent or buy machines they sewed on.⁴⁵ As Marcia L. McCormick points out, “factory owners typically ‘sweated’ out the work by hiring male subcontractors to produce their products, who in turn hired almost exclusively female workers to perform the labor.”⁴⁶ Women also often experienced sexual harassment and assault.⁴⁷

Another issue was wages. A large number of women could not earn enough to live on. They were paid one-only quarter to two-thirds of what men earned, and most male factory workers had problems financially supporting their families. Quite frequently, factory employers claimed that women did not need to earn more since they were working only temporarily until they got married. Another argument was that young women could always ask for support from their fathers.⁴⁸ Moreover, some men argued that as a woman should stay at home and take care of the family, she does not need to earn as much as man, because she was not the head of the family.⁴⁹ As a result, most young women had to live with their families for they mostly could not afford living alone. Unlike sons, daughters were commonly expected to hand over their earned money to parents. Young women often also had to help with the household, look after siblings and were spared no work at home, despite the fact that they had a job.⁵⁰

For a long time, women had no legal stand and chance to improve their working conditions, because there were no regulations of women’s work. The only way of gaining protection seemed to be the unions. However, men were rather hostile towards the idea of women being part of their union. They were often convinced that women would not be devoted enough to their cause for they considered them to be only temporary workers. Furthermore, many of them still thought that women should not be allowed to work for money.⁵¹ Female factory workers saw what men were able to achieve through their union

⁴⁵ Nancy F. Cott, *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 274.

⁴⁶ Marcia L. McCormick, “Consensus, Disensus, and Enforcement: Legal Protection of Working Women from the Time of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire to Today,” *New York University Journal of Legislation and Public Policy* 14, no. 3 (2011): 654, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.nyuylpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Marcia-L.-McCormick-Consensus-Dissensus-and-Enforcement-Legal-Protection-of-Working-Women-from-the-Time-of-the-Triangle-Shirtwaist-Factory-Fire-to-Today.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 56-58.

⁴⁸ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 59.

⁴⁹ Leonard, “Protecting Family and Race,” 776.

⁵⁰ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 61.

⁵¹ Hansan, “The Progressive Era.”

organization the American Federation of Labor.⁵² In 1903, in Boston, women established their own union called The National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL).⁵³ This organization was established by women who did not work in factories, they were white members of the middle or upper class who were reform-minded. They decided to help female workers themselves for they did not believe that women working in factories were able to enhance their working conditions on their own. These women, who were willing to help, also saw female workers as mothers of future Americans and therefore might have felt partial responsibility for their lives.⁵⁴ The leaders of the AFL were suspicious of any alliance between people of different classes and believed that industrial workers could only achieve progress if cooperating with each other among their union.⁵⁵ This might have been another reason why these organizations remained separated. Members of the NWTUL were, of course, female industrial workers, but middle and upper class women were members in a sense as well. "Thus upper-class women joined as the allies of working-class women, donating money, serving as spokespeople to the press, and arranging for legal representation."⁵⁶ However, based on the class distinction in American society, the union members oftentimes questioned both methods and motives of their patrons and did not believe that women without factory experience could understand their lives and help them.⁵⁷

One of the ways to draw attention and demand changes were strikes. Actions of women unions were unrecognized or opposed by employers. However, there were events which gained NWTUL support and also public attention. In 1912, there was a strike called "Bread and Roses" in Lawrence, Massachusetts which turned out to be one the biggest strikes of its time.⁵⁸ There were 23,000 textile workers, both men and women, who participated. This strike led to an investigation of working conditions throughout the country.⁵⁹ The support of well-respected women became crucial, for they made sure that the

⁵² See Jay Newton Baker, "The American Federation of Labor," *Yale Law Journal* 22, no. 2 (1912): 73-95.

⁵³ The 1911 Triangle Factory Fire, "Legislative Reform at State and Local Level," accessed March 10, 2015, <http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/legacy/legislativeReform.html>.

⁵⁴ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 61.

⁵⁵ The 1911 Triangle Factory Fire "Legislative Reform at State and Local Level."

⁵⁶ Harvard University Open Collection Program, "National Women's Trade Union League of America," accessed March 11, 2015, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ww/nwtul.html>.

⁵⁷ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 62.

⁵⁸ Harvard University Open Collection Program, "Lawrence Strike of 1912," accessed March 11, 2015, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ww/lawrencestrike.html>.

⁵⁹ Harvard University Open Collection Program, "Lawrence Strike of 1912."

press attended the strikes and reported how women were treated by the police. These women also acted as witnesses at court and were able to hire known lawyers to represent strikers who were arrested.⁶⁰ Striking women not always managed to win and have their demands fulfilled, but such actions convinced many women from various fields of industry that they could make a difference, and they joined the union. Unions also gave women a unique opportunity to be in leadership positions, because the entire organization was run by women only. The union members also started to focus on passing protective legislation. One of the crucial moments was the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in New York, during which 146 workers died, only 23 of them being men. This tragedy pointed public attention at alarming safety issues in the factories and led to more strict safety regulations.⁶¹ This event alarmed the NWTUL, which gathered evidence about working conditions in factories, for instance in the form of questionnaires, and urged the city government to act. As a result, factory owners were forced to start using fire alarms, fireproof materials, hoses and also extinguishers. These measures were followed in 1916 by the ban of smoking in factories.⁶² The NWTUL proved to be a highly influential organization in lives of not only women and was also connected with women's suffrage or women's clubs.⁶³ The members of the Union realized that their power to change the course of society was highly limited, and they had to fight hard to even draw public attention to serious issues of working women. However, public attention did not always mean the success of their cause and these women were at the mercy of male politicians and their paternalistic perspectives. Therefore, they began cooperating with suffragists and started explaining to women in the union that their only chance to truly make a difference in their lives, working conditions and wages was to gain the right to vote.

⁶⁰ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 68-69.

⁶¹ "Triangle Shirtwaist Factory (1911)," *New York Times*, March 11, 2011, accessed March 12, 2015, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/t/triangle_shirtwaist_factory_fire/index.html.

⁶² The 1911 Triangle Factory Fire, "Legislative Reform at State and Local Level."

⁶³ The National Women's History Museum, "Working Women: The Women's Trade Union League," accessed March 11, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/workingwomen.html>.

3 WOMEN'S SOCIAL WORK

As Plháková notes, “deprived of political rights, ... women focused their attention on ordinary lives of those living in poverty, hunger and disease, the weakest, the poorest, the most vulnerable – working class women and children.”⁶⁴ During the Progressive Era, middle and upper class women tended to spend less time at home. They sought out friends and started forming various social clubs. These were often devoted to literature, music or listening to lectures. Since most of the women did not attend college, self-education was of high importance.⁶⁵ Once women turned their attention to issues of society, these clubs naturally developed and women often started meeting for new purposes, such as living conditions of the poor, prostitutes or child labor. The more women knew about the public sphere, the more they felt that it needed a woman’s touch and their immediate attention, for they oftentimes believed that it was their task as women and mothers and viewed themselves as “the guardians of morality.”⁶⁶ Sense of morality was a strong impulse that led female reformers to help factory workers, to take interest in “fallen women” and actively participate in prohibition.⁶⁷

Many women became involved in public affairs and wished to cleanse society of the evils of industrialization and urbanization, and shift the attention of society to different social issues. A number of women therefore started actively seeking political change, and the more they were engaged in public life and learned about various issues, the bigger the changes they wanted to accomplish. They managed to achieve a number of successes, however their endeavor often reached its limits when it came to changes of the system since it was run by men who focused on different types of issues than, for example, child labor. Thus many clubwomen and members of various movements realized that the answer to their troubles was the right to vote, which would enable women to bring their point of view to politics and improve the society.

⁶⁴ Plháková, “The New American Woman,” 10.

⁶⁵ Alison M. Parker, “Clubwomen, Reformers, Workers, and Feminists of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,” in *Women’s Rights: People and Perspectives*, ed. Crista DeLuzio and Peter C. Mancall (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 119.

⁶⁶ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 93-94.

⁶⁷ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 94.

In 1890, the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) was established to strengthen women's influence.⁶⁸ Clubwomen were instructed to "keep away from discussions of religion and politics,"⁶⁹ but involve themselves in reform.⁷⁰ It gave clubwomen the opportunity to be better organized, and well-informed. One of the leaders creating policy of the movement was Mary I. Wood, a suffragist who fought for better working conditions of female store workers, and a member of a school board.⁷¹ One of the most important clubs was the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which played a crucial part during the time of prohibition in the United States. Women established a great number of clubs, and many of them focused on rather particular issues. To win their cause, women oftentimes sought the help of experts or scholars, and many of these were women.⁷² Clubwomen were interested in a great number of social issues and were searching for many improvements. For instance, once they started establishing libraries to improve the self-education of citizens, the attention of the GFWC turned to quality of schools. Women even took seminars to learn how to inspect chosen schools. After finding a problem, clubwomen demanded corrections and improvements. They fought for hot lunches at schools, playgrounds, and medical inspections for pupils.⁷³ Clubwomen felt empowered by their successes and started focusing on cities themselves and the improvement of living conditions in them. They lobbied for playgrounds, lighting, etc.⁷⁴

One of the issues which women considered to be close to them was child labor, which became part of the efforts of the NWTUL. At the beginning of the twentieth century, working class children were often forced to work from a young age. They were employed in coal mines oftentimes even at the age of 8, various factories, where they oftentimes had to work at night, or in cotton mills. They also worked on the street selling newspapers, shining shoes or acted as delivery boys.⁷⁵ Children working on the streets frequently suffered from a number of diseases, such as tuberculosis or respiratory infections.⁷⁶ Employment of children also led to a different perception from the family. The child was rather seen as an additional

⁶⁸ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 98.

⁶⁹ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 99.

⁷⁰ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 99.

⁷¹ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 98-99.

⁷² Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 97-105.

⁷³ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 97-98.

⁷⁴ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 103.

⁷⁵ Steven L. Piott, *Daily Life in the Progressive Era* (Greenwood: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011), 70.

wage earner who helped the family to survive, which was highly criticized by upper-class women. However, these parents also believed that work prevented children from being bored, and was in their eyes educational.⁷⁷ Children were sometimes even preferred by factory owners since they were considered as less of a liability. They were not likely to strike, could be paid less and were easily manageable.⁷⁸ Poor people tended to send their children to work at a still younger age for longer hours, because they wanted to be sure that if they get ill, there would be someone to look after them financially. Some parents even decided to leave their jobs and left only their children to earn money, whereas in rich families the tendency was to prolong the period of education, to prepare children as much as possible for future employment. Consequently, children from prominent families often started to work at age 26.⁷⁹

However, reformers, especially women, perceived child labor and working conditions of children as one of the crucial societal issues. Not only because they felt the need to protect them as such, but also because reformers wanted to protect the future workforce, since children were often injured and some of these injuries resulted in death.⁸⁰ Many individuals tried to draw attention to the issue of child labor. Among them was Mary Harris Jones, who took rather strict measures and even travelled with a couple of children whose health was devastated by working in factories. She also wanted to shock people and make them realize that their clothes were maybe made by a child laborer. She also tried to persuade politicians to deal with the issue.⁸¹ In 1904, the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) was established by both men and women reformers, and also the leadership of this organization was shared between men and women.⁸² “From the very beginning, the NCLC carried out systematic investigations in order to learn and document the extent and

⁷⁶ Piott, *Daily Life in the Progressive Era*, 71.

⁷⁷ Plháková, “The New American Woman,” 19.

⁷⁸ John E. Hansan, “National Child Labor Committee,” The Social Welfare History Project, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/organizations/national-child-labor-committee/>.

⁷⁹ Frederick Boyd Stevenson, “National Effort to Solve Child Labor,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1904, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9D00E5DF133AE733A25754C2A9679D946597D6CF>.

⁸⁰ Harvard University Library Open Collections Program, “National Child Labor Committee (NCLC),” accessed March 13, 2015, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ww/nclc.html>.

⁸¹ Plháková, “The New American Woman,” 20.

⁸² National Child Labor Committee, “About NCLC,” accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.nationalchildlabor.org/history.html>.

characteristics of child labor in different industries and states.”⁸³ A significant figure of the NCLC was Lewis Hine. He started working for the Committee in 1907 and became famous as a photographer. His task was to travel the country and gather evidence about child labor.⁸⁴ “Children told Hine of their experience working 12 to 14 hours a day, six days a week, related their fears of being injured or killed in a mining accident, and complained about the foul air they breathed every day.”⁸⁵ In response to the evidence presented by the NCLC, the federal government founded the Children’s Bureau in 1912.⁸⁶ This agency was run by Julia Lathrop from 1912-1921, making her the first female director of a federal agency.⁸⁷ In the 1910s, their effort led to a decline of working children by over one-third.⁸⁸ Many clubwomen also wanted to improve education of young children and therefore offer them better future prospects. Their aim was to persuade parents and children to go back to school, and they even offered them scholarships if the families would not survive without their children’s wages.⁸⁹ In 1924, there was a first attempt to pass regulation of child labor on a national level; however, this attempt was not successful. There were several other attempts, but the regulations finally passed in 1938 when the child labor was regulated by a federal law.⁹⁰

In 1884 in Britain, there was established a settlement house movement initiated by middle-class reformers to support people in need. This was an inspiration for American progressives who decided to establish their very own settlement houses.⁹¹ “The major purpose of settlement houses was to help to assimilate and ease the transition of immigrants into the labor force by teaching them middle-class American values.”⁹² Moreover, the movement was also a reaction to horrible living conditions of poor Americans and

⁸³ Hansan, “National Child Labor Committee.”

⁸⁴ John. D. Buenker, *The History of Wisconsin. Vol. IV: The Progressive Era, 1893-1914* (Stevens Point: Worzalla Publishing Company, 1998), 267.

⁸⁵ Piott, *Daily Life in the Progressive Era*, 72.

⁸⁶ Harvard University Library Open Collections Program, “National Child Labor Committee (NCLC).”

⁸⁷ Paul Theerman, “Julia Lathrop and Children’s Bureau,” *American Journal of Public Health* 100 (2010): 1589-1590, accessed March 14, 2015, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2920977/>.

⁸⁸ Buenker, *The History of Wisconsin*, 270.

⁸⁹ Mary E. McPherson, “Organizing Women: Women’s Clubs and Education in Georgia, 1890-1920” (PhD diss., Georgia State University, 2009), 55.

⁹⁰ Child Labor Public Education Project, “Child Labor in American History,” accessed March 13, 2015, https://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child_labor/about/us_history.html.

⁹¹ Harvard University Library Open Collections Program, “Settlement House Movement,” accessed March 19, 2015, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigration/settlement.html>.

⁹² Harvard University Library Open Collections Program, “Settlement House Movement.”

immigrants, since it threatened the health of every citizen, but some also viewed the situation as another chance for growing corruption as the city governments could exchange votes of desperate people for money or something else.⁹³ The settlement houses proved to be a highly popular way of improving society; at the end of the nineteenth century there were about 100 of these voluntary centers, increasing to 400 by 1910.⁹⁴ The settlement houses were rather revolutionary because they were built right in the neighborhoods which were in need of help, and reformers, oftentimes women, were working among the poor. “In the settlement houses, usually situated in the slums of America’s mushrooming urban centers, lived and learned and labored for a year or two or three a changing population of thousands of bright, socially concerned, college-educated women, and in lesser numbers, men.”⁹⁵ Settlement houses offered many women a way out from life at home, taking care of a household only and wasting their education on nothing but domestic lives.⁹⁶ People working in settlement houses were able to offer various services such as English lessons, much improved healthcare and also looking after children.⁹⁷

The most famous settlement house was Hull House governed by female reformers and suffragists Jane Addams and Ellen Starr in Chicago.⁹⁸ First, they decided to focus on the intellectual abilities of the immigrants and organized collective readings or taught them about art. However, they soon realized that such education is rather impractical for them and does not really help the poor to improve their lives.⁹⁹ Therefore, these women changed their philosophy and paid attention to real education concerning lessons in English, history, or literature. But only educating people was insufficient. One of the first things Addams and Starr did was establish a day-care center for smaller children that would ease the parents who only could send their children to work since they simply did not have time to look after them.¹⁰⁰ By the second year of its existence, Hull House weekly served more than two

⁹³ The University of Tennessee of Knoxville, “The American Settlement House Movement,” accessed March 13, 2015,

<http://www.lib.utk.edu/arrowmont/Steve/American%20Settlement%20House%20Movement.pdf>.

⁹⁴ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 106.

⁹⁵ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 107.

⁹⁶ The University of Tennessee of Knoxville, “The American Settlement House Movement.”

⁹⁷ The National Women’s History Museum, “Settlement House Women,” accessed March 20, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/settlementhouse.html>.

⁹⁸ The National Women’s History Museum, “Settlement House Women.”

⁹⁹ The University of Tennessee of Knoxville, “The American Settlement House Movement.”

¹⁰⁰ Naomi Segal, “Jane Addams of Hull-House,” Scholastic, accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4948>.

thousand people.¹⁰¹ The center developed into a crucial organization within the neighborhood and started offering shelter for homeless people, public baths and also public kitchens.¹⁰² The Hull House Settlement became considerably supported by local philanthropists and therefore gained the means to expand its activities.¹⁰³ As a result, services of Hull House were not limited only to providing with basic needs, there was also a gymnasium, theatre, a place for unions to meet, playground, swimming pool, theatre and also accommodation for working women.¹⁰⁴ The success of this particular project attracted similarly thinking people and brought together many significant female reformers, for instance a lawyer Julia Lathrop who establish a school for training social workers.¹⁰⁵ Many of the settlements slowly entered a political sphere. Jane Addams found out that the neighborhood Hull House was in had a higher rate of infant mortality. She decided to alarm clubwomen in Chicago, to survey conditions, which also included frequency of waste disposal and infant mortality in every block.¹⁰⁶ Once women collected enough evidence about the connection between diseases children often suffered, and led to their death, and insufficient garbage disposal, she invoked an investigation. Addams continued to gather more evidence, was persistent and refused to give up trying to solve the problem. All of this led to her appointment as “a garbage inspector of the ward,” which gave her official competence to supervise garbage collection.¹⁰⁷ She acted as a role model for other members of the settlement house movement as well. Many of them chose to follow her lead, pick a certain issue, make research and gather evidence in order to evoke changes. One of them was Florence Kelley, who investigated working conditions in factories. The results of her research were used as a basis for a law which limited working hours for women to 8 hours a day in Illinois. Another success of hers was the prohibition of child labor in the same state.¹⁰⁸ Kelley also managed to become the first inspector of factory conditions in

¹⁰¹ The National Women’s History Museum, “Hull House,” accessed March 20, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/hullhouse.html>.

¹⁰² The National Women’s History Museum, “Hull House.”

¹⁰³ The University of Tennessee of Knoxville, “The American Settlement Movement.”

¹⁰⁴ Judith McDonough, “Women Reformers in the Progressive Era,” *Social Education* 63, no. 5 (1999): 315.

¹⁰⁵ Schneider and Schneider, “*American Women in the Progressive Era*,” 108.

¹⁰⁶ Alison M. Parker, “Clubwomen, Reformers, Workers, and Feminists of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,” 123.

¹⁰⁷ Plháčková, “New American Woman,” 29.

¹⁰⁸ Parker, “Clubwomen, Reformers, Workers and Feminists of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,” 124.

Illinois.¹⁰⁹ As Mary R. McPherson states, “Hull House and its sister settlements in other cities institutionalized the concept of social responsibility.”¹¹⁰

However, the actions of settlement house movement members mostly focused only on white people. They viewed immigrants as able to assimilate into American middle class, whereas black people were not, which led to further segregation and the establishment of separate settlement houses for blacks.¹¹¹

American women also actively participated in alcohol prohibition. Drinking alcohol was a standard part of life of Americans. Not only that polluted water taught society that drinking alcohol was safer, but alcoholic beverages were also viewed as a source of energy, social stimulant, source of entertainment and an improvement of quality of life.¹¹² Moreover, immigrants, especially Irish and German immigrants, coming to America brought with them a different lifestyle, part of which was excessive alcohol consumption and public drinking.¹¹³ Much of the drinking happened in saloons where food was also served; some facilities even offered food for free if the customer ordered alcohol as well.¹¹⁴ Some saloon owners established gambling and prostitution in their establishments to keep costumers entertained. Excessive alcohol consumption alarmed women since they viewed it as a “destroyer of families and marriages.”¹¹⁵ Men spent money on alcohol instead of giving the means to support their children. Also if children worked in the streets, they often entered the establishments as well and could have access to alcohol.¹¹⁶ Therefore, saloons were found offensive and unacceptable by a rather large part of American society.¹¹⁷ One of the organizations that fought for alcohol prohibition was The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which was founded in 1874, and became one of the most successful and powerful women’s organizations with 150,000 dues-paying members.¹¹⁸ The organization

¹⁰⁹ McDonough, “Women Reformers in the Progressive Era,” 315.

¹¹⁰ McPherson, “Organizing Women,” 42.

¹¹¹ Harvard University Library Open Collections Program, “Settlement House Movement.”

¹¹² Hansan, “National Prohibition of Alcohol in the U.S.”

¹¹³ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 23.

¹¹⁴ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 23.

¹¹⁵ National Archives, “Teaching with Documents: The Volstead Act and Related Prohibition Documents,” accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/volstead-act/>.

¹¹⁶ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 24.

¹¹⁷ Temperance and Prohibition, “Why Prohibition?” accessed March 26, 2015, <https://prohibition.osu.edu/why-prohibition>.

¹¹⁸ The National Women’s History Museum, “Causes: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union,” accessed March 26, 2015. <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/wctu.html>.

focused on a great number of issues, such as prostitution, poverty, political corruption or women's suffrage.¹¹⁹ The members also managed to establish education programs in schools about the danger of consuming alcohol. However, after the death of the organization's leader, Frances Willard, the WCTU started losing part of its influence, for most of its members came from rural areas. At the turn of the century, young educated women focused rather on suffrage and believed that once they would gain the right to vote they could also affect temperance.¹²⁰ Yet, the organization was still rather influential and focused for example on immigrants, whom they often tried to persuade to abstain from alcohol consumption.¹²¹

Though the WCTU was quite a conservative organization, they supported women's suffrage. One of the consequences of mutual cooperation was that some members of the liquor industry fought hard against women's suffrage to weaken them.¹²² These two movements were in a way connected from the beginning of the WCTU, and in 1876 Francis Willard suggested that women should vote on the question of the liquor issue.¹²³ At the end of the nineteenth century, the WCTU members led public discussions about the need for active participation of women in public life, including voting. The local WCTU also supported the suffrage movement financially.¹²⁴ However, different temperance movements believed that the vote for women was one of the only ways to prohibit or control consumption of alcohol, for they believed that women understood the issue and would use their vote to support their cause. Suffragists, on the other hand, believed that supporting temperance and cooperation with the WCTU would give them a bigger chance to be seen and heard, and therefore gain the right to vote. Another thing they had in common was the desire to take control over their lives. In 1916, L. Ames Brown described the relation between women fighting for prohibition and those fighting for suffrage: "prohibition will have to fight the same liquor influence and many of the same organized political influences

¹¹⁹ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 104.

¹²⁰ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 106.

¹²¹ Alcohol: Problems and Solutions, "Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)," accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www2.potsdam.edu/alcohol/Controversies/Womans-Christian-Temperance-Union.html#.VRQ--44TNLN>.

¹²² Kenneth D. Rose, *American Women and the Repeal of Prohibition* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 34.

¹²³ Rose, *American Women and the Repeal of Prohibition*, 21.

¹²⁴ Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Temperance and Suffrage," PBS, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/resources/index.html?body=temperance.html>.

which opposed the suffrage amendment.”¹²⁵ The battle for alcohol prohibition was won in 1919 by the Eighteenth Amendment, which established the National Prohibition Act that prohibited the manufacture, production and sale of alcohol.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ L. Ames Brown, “Suffrage and Prohibition,” *The North American Review* 203, no.722 (1916): 100, accessed March 26, 2015.

¹²⁶ Alcohol: Problems and Solutions, “National Prohibition Act,” accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www2.potsdam.edu/alcohol/Controversies/National-Prohibition-Act.html#.VRV6qI4TNLM>.

4 BLACK WOMEN IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

Progressives focused their attention on improving many areas of society, “but for all their commendable efforts, most progressives never confronted racism, and a number supported various programs aimed at social control.”¹²⁷ During the Progressive Era, thousands of African Americans moved to cities in order to seek a better life and their living conditions and prospects were similar to those of white immigrants.¹²⁸ The lives of black people proved to be even more difficult after Jim Crow Laws, which led to further segregation and the increase of racism within the United States. Jim Crow Laws were limiting employment opportunities for African Americans, which strengthened the position of women within families since their income became equally important.¹²⁹ Sheldon L. Matz also claims that “progressives often saw segregation as a reasonable scientific consequence of natural selection as African Americans were unfit for juries, voting, or highly skilled labor.”¹³⁰ Many issues black women had to face during the Progressive Era were the result of Reconstruction after the Civil War, which failed in establishing racial equality.¹³¹ Black men were often prevented from voting since in order to vote they had to pay a poll tax and take a literacy test. Sometimes they were threatened or even killed if they fulfilled the conditions and attempted to vote. This led to a rapid decline of black voters.¹³² African Americans were in this way basically stripped of any political rights. Black households struggled as much as families of white poor people and “sought economic security and autonomy, but they also struggled for the civil and political rights others took for granted.”¹³³ As black men were deprived of their right to vote, black women decided to fight for the voting right for themselves.

Black women often worked in households, and their employment prospects were limited as they oftentimes had to accept jobs refused by white women. In 1900, 43.5 percent

¹²⁷ Piott, *Daily Life in the Progressive Era*, 177.

¹²⁸ Micheal Friedman and Brett Friedman, *Settlement Houses: Improving the Social Welfare of America's Immigrants* (New York: Rosen Publishing, 2006), 20.

¹²⁹ Sheldon L. Matz, “African American Women during the Progressive Era,” 2-4, Academia, accessed March 28, 2015, http://www.academia.edu/11332667/African_American_Women_During_the_Progressive_Era.

¹³⁰ Matz, “African American Women during the Progressive Era,” 4.

¹³¹ The National Museum of American History, “Civil War and Reconstruction,” accessed March 28, 2015, http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/timeline/pres_era/3_656.html.

¹³² Matz, “African American Women during the Progressive Era,” 4-5.

¹³³ Diner, *A Very Different Age*, 126.

of black women worked as domestic servants, and the number increased during the Progressive Era as white women lost most of their interest to work in households.¹³⁴ Another option was working in education as teachers at schools for black children or, for instance, as nurses. Jobs of black women often represented the main source of income for their families.¹³⁵ Just like white women, African American female workers were regularly sexually harassed, especially when working in a household, because men often conditioned employment of black women on sexual favors. Black women were also frequently forced into prostitution.¹³⁶

The hardship of black women and the entire community was known to middle-class black women who, inspired by white clubwomen and their social work, started founding clubs for black people. The entire movement of black clubwomen was initiated by former slave Ida B. Wells-Barnett.¹³⁷ She traveled the country and helped black women to start clubs, which focused on similar issues as clubs of white women, but also on problems known only to the black community.¹³⁸ Black female activists realized that they could only achieve improved healthcare and education if they made the changes themselves.¹³⁹ In 1896, black clubwomen united under the National Association of Colored Women (NACW).¹⁴⁰ In Atlanta was established the Neighborhood Union, whose members believed that the roots of problems of the black community could be found in limited education of black children, and thus decided to investigate every black school in the city and publish their findings. This organization also fought for better salaries of black teachers or special classes for mentally ill children. Furthermore, they offered kindergartens, nursery schools or playgrounds.¹⁴¹ These women also tried to save black women from prostitution and offered them education as an alternative by teaching them how to take care of a household and thus giving them an opportunity to find a job in the area.¹⁴² However, there were white women who decided to

¹³⁴ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 120.

¹³⁵ Metz, "African American Women during the Progressive Era," 8.

¹³⁶ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 116.

¹³⁷ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 124.

¹³⁸ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 125.

¹³⁹ Martha May, *Women's Role in Twentieth-Century America* (Westport: Greenwood Press: 2009), 120.

¹⁴⁰ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 44.

¹⁴¹ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 126.

¹⁴² Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 126.

cooperate with or help black women with their endeavor, such as Florence Kelley who assisted with founding National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.¹⁴³

Some settlement houses for white people established separated houses for blacks. Nevertheless, a large number of settlement houses simply refused to let blacks in, and some even moved to a different part of the city without a black community. In some cases, the boards of settlement houses were willing to rather close the center than serve black people, or increase membership fees to a point that black people would not be able to afford.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, a few settlement houses welcomed them. For instance, The Abraham Lincoln Center in Chicago was situated in predominantly white immigrant neighborhood, but its board made sure that at all times 50 percent of members were from the black community.¹⁴⁵ The settlement houses for blacks were often established by middle-class women as well. One of the settlement houses in Chicago was founded by former slave Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and was called the Negro Fellowship League and served black homeless men.¹⁴⁶ Another settlement house founder was Victoria Earle Matthews, who investigated the exploitation of black women coming to cities from the South by employment agencies. Furthermore, she offered young black unemployed women accommodation and food until they found a job. Later on, the center expanded and provided its members with similar services as settlement houses for white people, such as a library, classes of art, race, history, or religion, child day-care, etc.¹⁴⁷

Black women were mostly refused in all white women's organizations, including the suffrage movement. The leaders were often afraid to lose their white members or were simply racially biased.¹⁴⁸ Some white members of the movement argued that voting rights for white women would basically wipe out votes of black women because there are more white women than black men and women altogether.¹⁴⁹ At the beginning of the twentieth

¹⁴³ The National Women's History Museum, "African American Reform Ethics," accessed March 29, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/africanamericanreform.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Alfreda M. Iglehart and Rosina M. Becerra, *Social Services and the Ethnic Community: History and Analysis* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2011), 130.

¹⁴⁵ Iglehart and Becerra, "*Social Services and the Ethnic Community*," 131.

¹⁴⁶ Friedman and Friedman, "*Settlement Houses*," 20.

¹⁴⁷ Ralph E. Luker, "Missions, Institutional Churches, and Settlement Houses: The Black Experience, 1885-1910," *Journal of Negro History* 69, no. 3/4 (1984): 104.

¹⁴⁸ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 127.

¹⁴⁹ The National Women's History Museum, "African American Women and Suffrage," accessed March 29, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/rightsforwomen/AfricanAmericanwomen.html>.

century, black women started founding their own suffrage clubs and their movement was, especially in the North, publicly supported by black men.¹⁵⁰ A large number of black women managed to enter one of the major organizations, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which supported the universal right to vote. However, from the beginning most African American women had only small opportunities to actively participate. This changed with growing number of black organizations. Even working-class women were able to significantly contribute, and suffrage became one of the main goals of the clubs.¹⁵¹

A major difference between white and black suffragists in general was that white women fought for their own right to vote, whereas black women wanted universal enfranchisement. African American women wanted to regain suffrage for black men and presented their cause to the white public whenever they could, despite the fact that their chance to gain suffrage was far smaller.¹⁵² Acts of discrimination from the side of many white suffragists only provoked black men to support the Nineteenth Amendment, which would include all women. They joined women in the NAACP, and together with white women fought for passing the Amendment.¹⁵³ However, passing the Nineteenth Amendment was not a complete victory for black women, for in the South women experienced a similar policy as black men and were basically disenfranchised for several decades.¹⁵⁴ However, as Sheldon L. Metz states “the courage of African American women to reject traditional cultural boundaries in the face of social pressures and even violence in order to fulfill personal and familial obligations is inspiring and an important aspect of the Progressive Era.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 2.

¹⁵¹ Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 9.

¹⁵² Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 9.

¹⁵³ Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ The National Women's History Museum, “African American Women and Suffrage.”

¹⁵⁵ Metz, “African American Women during the Progressive Era,” 9.

5 THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

The fight for women's suffrage unofficially started with the Seneca Falls Convention in New York in 1848, where about 300 people including activists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized the first public protest against discrimination of women in economic, political and social spheres.¹⁵⁶ One of the outcomes was the "Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions". A document inspired by the Declaration of Independence, its main goal was basically to establish equality between men and women at certain levels, such as education or legal treatment. The document consisted also of political rights and especially women's right to vote.¹⁵⁷ When the Civil War ended, there were proposed two new amendments; the Fourteenth Amendment punished states for denying the right to vote to men, and the Fifteenth Amendment assured voting right for black males since it wrote that suffrage could not be denied based on the race.¹⁵⁸

Some of the early suffragists were against the Fifteenth Amendment, but suggested the Sixteenth Amendment which would grant the voting right to women. This branch was represented by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony who ran the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), which was more radical when promoting ideas about women's rights.¹⁵⁹ Another women's suffrage organization was the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), headed by Lucy Stole, which chose to pursue a different approach. They supported the Fifteenth Amendment while trying to promote women's enfranchisement. The organization wanted to show that not all the suffragists were militant, and they also stood for traditional American values. To promote this cause, the members also hired agents who travelled the country in order to explain their values, found local branches of the AWSA and spread feminist literature. The organization also tried to suggest reforms consisting of partial voting rights for women and hoped that it would potentially

¹⁵⁶ Aileen S. Kraditos, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Norton and Company, 1981), 1.

¹⁵⁷ The National Women's History Museum, "The Seneca Falls Convention and the Early Suffrage Movement," accessed March 2, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/rightsforwomen/SenecaFalls.html>.

¹⁵⁸ The National Women's History Museum, "The Seneca Falls Convention and the Early Suffrage Movement."

¹⁵⁹ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, "A Short History of the Woman Suffrage Movement in America," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Women's Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995), 10.

lead to full enfranchisement of American women.¹⁶⁰ Both organizations fought for suffrage, and their position was much easier in the West where politicians of several states granted women the right to vote. There are many theories as to why society in the West was rather open to the enfranchisement of women. Some men hoped that women would be grateful for granting them enfranchisement and would support them in return, as while other theory states that women would help “cultivate” Western society.¹⁶¹

A turning point, however, occurred at the beginning of the Progressive Era when the NWSA and AWSA decided to join forces and united both organizations under the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Leaders of the Association were, for instance, Anna Howard Shaw, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.¹⁶² At first, members of the NAWSA could not agree on whether to focus on the state or federal level when promoting women’s suffrage. However, they chose to create some sort of a compromise between these strategies, and worked on making their strategy more effective.¹⁶³ Suffragists started being more active on the local level since they found there a great number of allies. Women became more publicly engaged during the Progressive Era and felt the need to sanitize the society, gain control over their lives and help those in need. Therefore, clubwomen, members of the settlement house movement and also members of the NWTUL started turning to enfranchisement of women as their only chance to truly influence the course of events in society and politics. As women also got familiar with leadership positions and being part of unionized groups of women, they were capable of being better organized and therefore more efficient.

Moreover, the idea for suffrage was no longer a topic for only upper or middle-class women. These organizations, especially the NWTUL, helped to spread this concept among women from the working classes. They managed to convince them that the right to vote would improve the life of every woman and was equally important for female members of every social class. Women also gained confidence with the growing number of their achievements. As Maureen A. Flanagan suggests, “what all these women wanted was power

¹⁶⁰ Wheeler, “A Short History of the Woman Suffrage Movement in America,” 10.

¹⁶¹ Wheeler, “A Short History of the Woman Suffrage Movement in America,” 11.

¹⁶² John Simkin, “Women’s Suffrage,” Spartacus Educational, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://spartacus-educational.com/USAsuffrage.htm>.

¹⁶³ Steven M. Buechler, *Women’s Movements in the United States: Woman Suffrage, Equal Rights, and Beyond* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 53-54.

– to achieve social justice reforms, to enable all women to protect themselves and their families, and to eliminate conditions of labor such as those at the Triangle factory.”¹⁶⁴

Women organized petitions and delegations and their endeavor started bearing fruit with winning the vote in more states. In 1910 it was Washington, California in 1911, Kansas, Arizona and Oregon in 1912.¹⁶⁵ However, it was not enough, and suffragists started reconsidering their campaign. There were even opinions whether to somehow use votes of enfranchised women to assure suffrage for all American women.¹⁶⁶ Suffragists dealt with rather a difficult question, states Aileen S. Kraditor, “how a group without political power could obtain such power from those who already had it.”¹⁶⁷ Women wanted to win the vote in New York as they viewed it as an efficient way of increasing the pressure on Congress.¹⁶⁸ Women in New York started tying themselves with working women even more as they began explaining to politicians that these women needed enfranchisement in order to protect themselves. Suffragists started attending hearings at the capitol, spreading their literature such as the Votes for Women Broadside, which also stated reasons why women demanded suffrage, or lobbying for their cause.¹⁶⁹ One of the most visible actions of the suffrage movement was a parade on March 3, 1913 in Washington, D.C. on Pennsylvania Avenue. The parade was led by Inez Milholland riding a white horse, and behind her went 5,000 women and a couple of male supporters.¹⁷⁰ Part of the parade were also African American women who marched in a separated unit.¹⁷¹ Suffragists chose this particular date for it was the day before the inauguration of the new president, Woodrow Wilson. Women wanted to push the new president to face their issue.¹⁷² However, the parade was blocked by mostly men, and women were later even assaulted. Policemen called in a cavalry, nonetheless, they participated in the riot as well.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁴ Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 74.

¹⁶⁵ The National Women’s History Museum, “The National American Woman Suffrage Association Reinvigorated,” accessed April 5, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/rightsforwomen/Reinvigorated.html>.

¹⁶⁶ Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 220-221.

¹⁶⁷ Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 220.

¹⁶⁸ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 176.

¹⁶⁹ Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 177.

¹⁷⁰ Sheridan Harvey, “Marching for the Vote: Remembering the Woman Suffrage Parade of 1913,” Library of Congress, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/aw01e/aw01e.html>.

¹⁷¹ The National Women’s History Museum, “African American Women and Suffrage.”

¹⁷² Piott, *Daily Life in the Progressive Era*, 161.

¹⁷³ Harvey, “Marching for the Vote.”

Though there were riots and some people behaved aggressively towards suffragists, there were also their supporters. Suffragists were often supported by their husbands, and some were closely connected with the abolition movement. In the 1830s, there were thousands of women who actively participated in the movement, and some even managed to gain a high position within it. This experience led some feminists to the realization that the situation of black people is similar to their own, and they decided to work on expanding women's rights.¹⁷⁴

Since women were supporters of the abolition movement and created rather a close connection with abolitionists, many of these decided to support women's fight for suffrage. However, a number of them were against expanding political rights for women as they viewed it as inappropriate.¹⁷⁵ Participation in the abolition movement was a great experience for women. The male members of the movement provided them with opportunities to express their own thoughts and ideas, organize events and also write. This was a truly valuable experience for women, which bore fruit later when they started their own movements. As abolitionists saw how capable women were, they started supporting their cause.¹⁷⁶ Maybe that some of them also perceived a certain kind of parallel between African Americans and the social position of women. Many former abolitionists fought for universal suffrage for both women and blacks. However, a number of former abolitionists celebrated the introduction of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which denied suffrage to women and caused a division over the movement's priorities. Some of the former abolitionists, both men and women, chose to keep supporting women's suffrage, however some members believed that time for women's enfranchisement would come one day, but now it was time to further support African Americans and focus on their issues.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, as Nancy A. Hewitt concludes, "suffragists owed a substantial debt to the antislavery movement, which had served as the most important training ground for its

¹⁷⁴ The National Women's History Museum, "The Abolition Movement and Woman Suffrage," accessed April 8, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/rightsforwomen/abolitionandsuffrage.html>.

¹⁷⁵ Nancy A. Hewitt, "Abolition and Suffrage," PBS, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/resources/index.html?body=abolitionists.html>.

¹⁷⁶ Hewitt, "Abolition and Suffrage."

¹⁷⁷ Hewitt, "Abolition and Suffrage."

leaders and the most important repository for ideas of sexual as well as racial emancipation.”¹⁷⁸

Though suffragists found their supporters, there were many arguments against women’s enfranchisement. One of them came from Social Darwinism, which largely influenced American society. Darwin himself believed that women were inferior. Some Darwinists even claimed that the intellectual difference between men and women was so great that they should be classified as a different species.¹⁷⁹ Based on this theory, women were also considered having the intellectual abilities of the “grown up Negro” or often an “adult child.”¹⁸⁰ Women were also perceived as less intelligent because they did not have to use their brain as much as men, since man “needs more brain than the woman whom he must protect and nourish, the sedentary woman, lacking any interior occupations, whose role is to raise children, love, and be passive.”¹⁸¹ Therefore many people believed that women were simply not able to vote and make such important decisions like deciding the course of politics. An influential figure was also a French citizen and one of the founders of social psychology, Gustave Le Bon, who claimed that “in the most intelligent races, as among the Parisians, there are a large number of women whose brains are closer in size to those of gorillas than to the most developed male brains.”¹⁸² Le Bon also concluded that providing women higher education was dangerous. Not only that, in his opinion, women were not capable of logic and their own thoughts, he was afraid by what would happen if an inferior brain received education.¹⁸³ One of the strongest arguments against enfranchisement of women was that they simply could not be granted such responsibility as they would not be able to handle it and make responsible decision.

However, opponents of the women’s suffrage were not only men, but also women. One of their arguments was that women already had enough power since they actively participated in certain social issues and there was no need to expand it. Anti-suffragists formed various organizations, such as the Association Opposed to Woman’s Suffrage with

¹⁷⁸ Hewitt, “Abolition and Suffrage.”

¹⁷⁹ Jerry Bergman, “The History of Evolution’s Teaching of Women’s Inferiority,” *American Scientific Affiliation* 48, no. 3 (1996), accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.rae.org/pdf/women.pdf>.

¹⁸⁰ Bergman, “The History of Evolution’s Teaching of Women’s Inferiority.”

¹⁸¹ Steven Jay Gould, “Women’s Brains,” University of Washington, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://faculty.washington.edu/lynnhank/wbgould.pdf>.

¹⁸² Steven Jay Gould, “Women’s Brains.”

¹⁸³ Steven Jay Gould, “*Women’s Brains.*”

its headquarters in New York.¹⁸⁴ Some women also thought that the right to vote would threaten households, and many of them believed the theories of Social Darwinism claiming that females were simply created to look after families and homes. Furthermore, some women were worried that they would not be able to handle such a responsibility.¹⁸⁵ A number of women fighting against the enfranchisement felt like society was losing control over their lives and its course, but unlike suffragists who wanted to react to these changes, some of anti-suffragists wanted to eliminate them.¹⁸⁶ A number of women also believed that they were protected by their husbands and fathers and did not perceive the right to vote as part of citizenship or one of their natural rights, such as liberty. Some anti-suffragists concluded that women were sufficiently represented in politics by male members of their families. Unlike suffragists, most of the main leaders of the anti-suffrage movement were members of the highest class and appreciated their social position and privileges and feared that enfranchisement would lead to losing their status.¹⁸⁷

Another reason was racial. Both men and women were aware that granting suffrage to women would include black women. This argument was mostly heard from people living in the South who were convinced that the vote was more desired by black women than white women. And since black men were basically disfranchised in the South, black women were expected to be rather militant voters.¹⁸⁸ Senator Pat Harrison also frightened southern politicians when he claimed that ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment “would also be a ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment that gave Negro men the right to vote.”¹⁸⁹

The situation of women’s suffrage was highly influenced by World War I, which changed the social position of women in American society. Since the United States joined the war in 1917, a large number of men had to fight and therefore were replaced by women in their jobs. As a result, the female workforce became crucial for American industry.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁴ Sharon Hazard, “The Roosevelts Disagree: The Debate About Women’s Suffrage,” accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/womens-anti-suffrage-movement.html>.

¹⁸⁵ Artour Aslanian, “The Use of Rhetoric in Anti-Suffrage and Anti-Feminist Publications,” *Lux: Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University* 2, no. 1 (2013): 3.

¹⁸⁶ Hazard, “The Roosevelts Disagree.”

¹⁸⁷ Aslanian, “The Use of Rhetoric in Anti-Suffrage and Anti-Feminist Publications,” 3.

¹⁸⁸ Kenneth R. Johnson, “White Racial Attitudes as a Factor in the Arguments against the Nineteenth Amendment,” *Phylon* 31, no. 1 (1970): 31-33.

¹⁸⁹ Kenneth R. Johnson, “White Racial Attitudes as a Factor in the Arguments against the Nineteenth Amendment,” 33.

¹⁹⁰ Tae H. Kim, “Where Women Worked during World War I,” Seattle General Strike Project, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://depts.washington.edu/labhist/strike/kim.shtml>.

Women also had to enter new occupations, such as chauffeurs, street car conductors or locomotive dispatchers; they began working in ammunition and powder factories, started constructing airplanes, etc.¹⁹¹ World War I was also the first war in which women were required to be actively involved in the military. Some women decided to work for charity organizations such as the American Red Cross, but many of them worked as nurses or telephone operators, often also in Europe. The war turned women into a symbol which must be protected, and women were expected to lift up spirits of soldiers and support them. Protection of women was also often used as justification for the war.¹⁹²

However, suffragists continued with their efforts during the war and started new organizations supporting the country. Club women, members of the settlement movement and even suffragists turned their attention to war-related issues. The government decided to intervene in their efforts and created a committee which would unite activities of women in order to make them more efficient. This committee was called the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense, and its main leader was active suffragist Anna Shaw.¹⁹³

When the war ended, women wished to keep their new social position since they experienced a new kind of responsibility and freedom. The lack of men enabled them to enter job positions which would be otherwise unthinkable. The contribution of women during the war was unquestionable and yet they fought hard during the war to remind every citizen in the United States, and especially President Wilson, that their country fought for true democracy abroad, but politicians denied it to citizens at home. In the time of war, this became one of the main arguments of the suffrage movement. The pressure from suffragists was rising, and President Wilson realized that enfranchisement of women was inevitable.¹⁹⁴ Finally, the 19th Amendment granting American women the right to vote passed on June 4, 1919. The last state to ratify the Amendment was Tennessee on August 26, 1920.¹⁹⁵ As

¹⁹¹ Kim, "Where Women Worked during World War I."

¹⁹² The Stars and Stripes, "Women and the War Effort," accessed April 10, 2015, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/sgphtml/sashtml/women.html>.

¹⁹³ The National Women's History Museum, "Women in World War I," accessed April 10, 2015, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/worldwarI.html>.

¹⁹⁴ Schneider and Schneider, *Women in the Progressive Era*, 186.

¹⁹⁵ Library of Congress, "Topics in Chronicling America – the Nineteenth Amendment," accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/topics/nineteenth.html>.

Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider conclude, “for themselves and for American women to follow they won the right that symbolizes democratic control and full citizenship.”¹⁹⁶

After obtaining the right to vote, women were expected to react to this new situation in various ways. Some scholars anticipated that women would be highly influenced by the rest of the society and would vote accordingly since they lacked political experience or even interest in politics as such. Women were also expected not to use their newly gained right and simply not vote at all.¹⁹⁷ Many potential female voters were affected by the general belief of the inferiority of their sex and did not feel suited to vote. Some women were also discouraged by, for instance, their husbands.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, suffragists believed that women would grasp this opportunity and vote. However, the women’s turnout was rather low. There was quite a difference between cities and rural areas, since female voters from cities were more often registered than those from rural areas.¹⁹⁹

Active female voters were mostly members of clubs and women who were previously actively engaged in either public issues or women’s rights.²⁰⁰ Frequent voters were also young and educated women who, unlike their mothers or grandmothers, started being used to political discussions and a society of female reformers and activists.²⁰¹ Even though part of the female voters used their new right, the impact was not as significant as the suffragists expected. Once women achieved enfranchisement, their interests and focus splintered, and they were therefore less effective in pushing a number of reforms.²⁰² This may have led some women to believe that even when they could vote, they were not really able to change the course of things, and discouraged them from voting.

¹⁹⁶ Schneider and Schneider, *Women in the Progressive Era*, 190.

¹⁹⁷ Kevin J. Corder and Christina Wohlbrech, “Political Context and the Turnout on New Women Voters after Suffrage,” *Journal of Politics* 68, no. 1 (2006): 34, accessed April 14, 2015, http://www3.nd.edu/~cwolbrec/PDFs/CorderWolbrecht_JOP2006.pdf.

¹⁹⁸ Corder and Wohlbrech, “Political Context and the Turnout on New Women Voters after Suffrage,” 35.

¹⁹⁹ Kristy Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics before the New Deal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 58.

²⁰⁰ Andersen, *After Suffrage*, 59.

²⁰¹ Corder and Wohlbrech, “Political Context and the Turnout on New Women Voters after Suffrage,” 36.

²⁰² Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

CONCLUSION

The Progressive Era changed the course of society with heavy industrialization and urbanization. Many members of American society started feeling their lives were getting out of control. Female reformers had often the same feeling and aimed to change that. Women's clubs focused on a large number of societal issues, which women felt were neglected by governments. Clubwomen turned their attention to working conditions of female workers, not only because they wanted to help fellow women, but also because they wanted to protect mothers of future Americans. The only tool women had was establishing women's unions to draw public attention to this issue and make society realize how serious a problem it was. Women also focused on child labor since they wished to protect future American citizens. They decided to help the immigrants via settlement houses which were founded all over the country. Women believed they could be integrated into American society and become valuable members. The more issues women found and wanted to fix, the more limits of their own power they discovered. The society was run by men who did not have to listen to women and respect their demands. Women desired to clean up society and gain control over their own lives. Their prospects in this matter were, however, indeed limited. Many women found the answer in obtaining the right to vote and thereby truly influencing the course of society and politics.

Although women did fight for their enfranchisement even before, during the Progressive Era they managed to turn their effort into a rather mass movement. It no longer consisted of only upper and middle class women, but also involved women from working classes who understood that suffrage was one of the best ways to change their lives. In other words, women in the Progressive Era managed to connect women from all social classes and explain to them the importance of suffrage. However, not all the women wished to expand their rights. Some wanted to stop the changes happening in society or believed in theories of Social Darwinism about inferiority of women. Many anti-suffragists also thought that there was no need to vote since in politics they were represented by their husbands. There were many arguments against women's suffrage also from male Americans who, for instance, claimed that women would not be able to handle such a responsibility. Reasons against suffrage were also racial.

Women were active during World War I. They often worked in military and became a major workforce. Yet, they fought as hard as ever to gain enfranchisement. One of their

main arguments during the war was that the United States fought for true democracy outside their borders but did not even have it within the country. Suffragists won their battle on August 26, 1920 when Tennessee became the last state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment enfranchising all women, including African Americans.

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