

*Presents*

## Rights for Women: The Suffrage Movement and Its Leaders



### African American Women and Suffrage

Many African American women were highly active in the woman suffrage movement. In the antebellum period, like Anglo women, many black women became active abolitionists and supporters of women's rights. [Sojourner Truth](#), a former slave, became famous as both an abolitionist and an advocate of woman suffrage. In 1851, she made her famous speech, "Ain't I A Woman," at a convention in Akron, Ohio. Other black women suffragists from this time period include Margaretta Forten, Harriet Forten Purvis, and [Mary Ann Shadd Cary](#).

Black women participated in the American Equal Rights Association, and later in both the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association. Historian Rosalyn Terborg-Penn argues that black women were drawn more to the AWSA than the NWSA as the AWSA supported the enfranchisement of black men.

In the 1880s and 1890s, black women, like their white counterparts, began to form woman's clubs. Many of these clubs included suffrage as one plank in their broader platform. In 1896, many of these clubs affiliated to form the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), with [Mary Church Terrell](#) as president. From its founding until the passage of the 19th Amendment, the NACW included a department that worked for the advancement of woman suffrage. The National Baptist Woman's Convention, another focal point of black women's organizational power, also consistently supported woman suffrage. In addition, black women founded clubs that worked exclusively for woman's suffrage, such as the Alpha Suffrage Club of Chicago, founded by [Ida B. Wells](#) in 1913.

Despite this strong support for woman's suffrage, black women sometimes faced discrimination within the suffrage movement itself. From the end of the Civil War onwards, some white suffragists argued that enfranchising women would serve to cancel out the "Negro" vote, as there would be more white women voters than black men and women voters combined. Although some black clubwomen participated actively in the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), the NAWSA did not always welcome them with open arms. In the 20th century, the NAWSA leadership sometimes discouraged black women's clubs from attempting to affiliate with the NAWSA. Some Southern members of NAWSA argued for the enfranchisement of white women only. In addition, in the suffrage parade of 1913 organized by Alice Paul's Congressional Union, black women were asked to march in a segregated unit. Ida B. Wells refused to do so, and slipped into her state's delegation after the start of the parade.

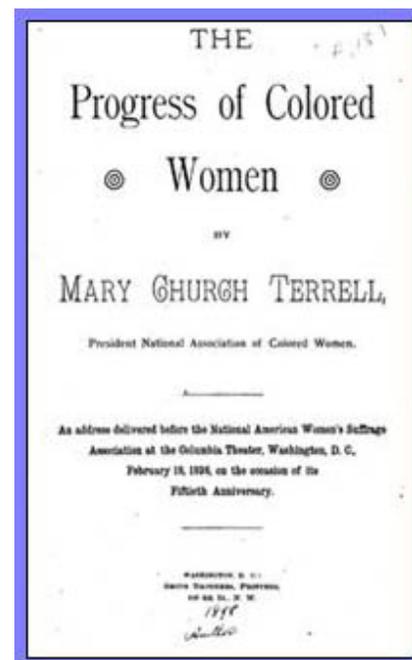
When the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920, it legally enfranchised all women, white and black. However, within a decade, state laws and vigilante practices effectively disenfranchised most black women in the South. It would take another major movement for voting rights – the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s – before black women in the South would be effectively enfranchised.

#### Leaders:

[Sojourner Truth](#), [Ida Bell Wells-Barnett](#), [Mary Eliza Church Terrell](#), [Mary Ann Shadd Cary](#), [Nannie Helen Burroughs](#), [Frances Ellen Watkins Harper](#), [Daisy Elizabeth Adams Lampkin](#)



Sojourner Truth, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division



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Front page of address made by Mary Church Terrell to the NAWSA, Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Daniel A.P. Murray Pamphlets Collection



Ida B. Wells, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

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