

Waging War for Women

**Introductions to six suffragists and to the books that tell
their stories. A Celebration of the Centennial of the 19th
Amendment**

By

Adele Fasick

Introducing the Warrior Women...

More than 200 years ago Abigail Adams opened the discussion of women's rights in the new United States. "Don't forget the ladies" she admonished her husband, John Adams who was busy drafting a constitution for the new nation.

But the men forgot. And for more than a century, men—white property owners to begin with—controlled all the voting rights in the country. But many women never forgot. The posts in this booklet introduce some of the women who fought to expand voting rights to women. Each post also suggests a biography that charts their journey.

2020 marks the hundredth anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment that gave American women the right to vote. It is time to look back at the lives of six of the most outspoken and radical women who brought us this victory. The women's lives span the years from the beginning of the country until the early 20th century; the group includes white women and African Americans, immigrants and American born; some were Quakers, one an atheist, others followed various religions. What distinguishes them is that they all fought actively to make life better for women. They refused to be silent. They rejected the limited role given to women. It took more than one lifetime to win the vote, but they never gave up the fight. Meet the warriors:

- Lucretia Mott
- Sojourner Truth
- Ernestine Rose
- Victoria Woodhull
- Ida B. Wells
- Alice Paul

They are all women we should remember and honor as we celebrate 100 years of women voting.

Amendment XIX:

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

A Radical Message from a Quiet Voice—Lucretia Mott

Visitors to the Capital Building in Washington D.C. can view an austere marble sculpture featuring three pioneers in the struggle for women's rights. Standing at the front of the group is a demure woman in a Quaker bonnet—Lucretia Mott, a woman whose mild appearance is at odds with the fiery spirit that guided her life. She was a rebel who proclaimed her controversial opinions fiercely and effectively for more than half a century.

Born Lucretia Coffin on Nantucket Island off the coast of Massachusetts in 1793, Lucretia became aware of the inequality faced by women while she was still very young. When she began teaching as a 17-year-old, she quickly noticed that the male teachers were paid far more than women were. She never forgot that.

It was while she was teaching that she met her future husband, James Mott. The two were married in 1811 in Philadelphia where her family had moved after leaving Nantucket and its shrinking whaling industry. James started a business and the young couple became active in the Philadelphia Quaker Meeting and soon began raising a family.

At Quaker meetings, unlike most religious groups at that time, women as well as men were allowed to speak to the group. Lucretia was such an inspiring speaker that she was soon appointed a Minister, which among Quakers was an honorary, unpaid position.

The most contentious issue of the day was slavery, and Pennsylvania, a free state bordering two slave states, was in the middle of the debate. Although most Quakers were anti-slavery, they differed in how to support abolition. Some advocated a gradual freeing of slaves, some wanted former slaves to be resettled in Africa. Lucretia soon identified herself as one of the more radical Quakers advocating an immediate end to slavery and a full integration of former slaves into American life. To hasten the end of slavery, Lucretia refused to buy products made or harvested by slaves—sugar from the West Indies and cotton from the Southern slave states—even though her children and her husband sometimes complained about her decision.

As her children grew older, Lucretia was able to devote more of her time to social activism. She worked tirelessly for abolition and helped to found the interracial Philadelphia Female Anti-slavery Society, a group that lasted longer than any other women's anti-slavery group in America.

In 1838, Lucretia participated in the week-long celebration of the opening of Philadelphia Hall as a major center for anti-slavery groups. Many Philadelphians objected to interracial meetings. Some yelled insults at participants to protest the presence of mixed-race groups in their city. When Lucretia gave her talk to a women's group, her listeners could hear men and boys gathering outside the hall, threatening violence. The African American women in the audience were even more fearful than the white women that they might be targeted. To protect everyone, all the women, black and white, linked arms and walked outside together. Violence was averted that night, but the struggle was far from over.

The World Anti-Slavery Conference held in London in 1840 marked a turning point in Lucretia Mott's life. Although she was already an outstanding spokesperson for the anti-slavery movement, neither she nor any of the other women who attended the meeting were allowed to participate in the conference. All of the women were required to sit in a separate section of the

room where they could listen to the men make speeches. Despite this slap in the face, Lucretia benefited from attending the meetings because it was there that she met the young Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The two soon became close friends.

Together Stanton and Mott organized a meeting in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, a meeting which is usually considered the official start of the campaign for women's right to vote. At the close of the meeting, both of them signed the *Declaration of Sentiments*, a document that concluded with these words:

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation—in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.

Together Lucretia Mott, the quiet little Quaker, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, her more flamboyant friend, energized the women's rights movement in America for the next half century. Neither of them lived to see women win the right to vote, but neither of them ever gave up the struggle. If you'd like to read more about Lucretia Mott, there is an excellent recent biography by Carol Faulkner called *Lucretia Mott's Heresy: Abolition and Women's Rights in Nineteenth Century America*.

As for the sculpture in the Capital that honors women's rights, that too had a long, painful path to achieve its present position. It was unveiled in 1921, but was soon moved to the Crypt of the Capitol where it stood among the brooms and mops stored there for more than twenty years. It was not until 1995 that women's groups were finally able to persuade Congress to vote for its return to the Rotunda.

The Surprising Truth about Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth is an American heroine. She fought for the abolition of slavery and for rights for women. Her story is told in American classrooms, her picture is featured on U.S. stamps, and quotes attributed to her are repeated over and over again. But almost everything we know about her is secondhand and many of her pictures and quotes are distorted or even downright false.

Sojourner Truth is the name she chose for herself after having lived half a lifetime as Isabella Baumfree or Isabella Von Wagener. Born in 1797, or thereabouts, in New York State, Isabella was a household slave for about thirty years of her life. Her first language was Dutch, not English, just as it was for many of the inhabitants of upstate New York at that time.

When slavery was abolished in New York in 1827, Isabella was legally freed. However, after being freed, ex-slaves still owed their former masters several years of labor. Isabella decided in 1826 that she had repaid her owner sufficiently and she walked away from his household carrying her infant daughter. She moved in with a nearby anti-slavery family who negotiated a bargain with her former owner to pay off her labor obligations. To the surprise of many, she remained friendly with her former owner and his family for years afterward. Her experiences as a slave in New York were dramatically different from those of the Southern slaves who were part of the widespread plantation society.

Although she had very little education and never learned to read or write, Sojourner Truth had an impressive physical appearance, a mesmerizing eloquence, and an abundance of courage. When she discovered that her young son, Peter, had been sold illegally to a Southern slave owner, she sued for his freedom, thus becoming the first African American woman to sue a white man in court and win.

Shortly after Truth had gained her freedom, she became an ardent Christian, embracing the emotional religion of the Methodists. Throughout her life Truth remained strongly religious, becoming a disciple of several charismatic religious leaders. After she moved to New York City, where she worked as a housekeeper, she became acquainted with the many of the most prominent free blacks in the city's religious community.

In 1843 Isabella's life changed. She named herself Sojourner Truth because she felt called to spend her life urging people to embrace Jesus. She joined a religious community in Massachusetts and began her career as a preacher supporting abolition and women's rights. Her remarkable physical appearance—she was almost six feet tall—combined with her deep, far-reaching voice, made her a memorable presence wherever she appeared.

Sojourner Truth's most famous speech, usually remembered as her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech, was given at a women's right conference in Akron, Ohio in 1851. Her speech was reported a month later in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* by Rev. Marius Robinson who attended the conference. In his report, and other contemporary reports, no one mentioned her ever asking the question "Ain't I a woman?" It would be another decade before that question appeared in print.

The record of Sojourner Truth's life has been shaped by the people to whom she entrusted her story. Unfortunately, the gulf between her and the white women who recorded her story was almost unbridgeable, so the written accounts of her life and experiences were often distorted. During the 1850s, Truth dictated her autobiography to Olive Gilbert, who wrote the book that

was later published as the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, a book that is still widely available today.

Harriet Beecher Stowe also played a part in publicizing the life of Truth. She wrote an article that appeared in the *Atlantic* magazine in 1863 called “Sojourner Truth, the Libyan Sibyl”. Stowe’s version of the story presents Truth speaking in a Southern dialect as in this exchange:

"Well, Sojourner, did you always go by this name?"

"No, 'deed! My name was Isabella; but when I left the house of bondage, I left everything behind. I wa'n't goin' to keep nothin' of Egypt on me, an' so I went to the Lord an' asked Him to give me a new name. And the Lord gave me Sojourner, because I was to travel up an' down the land, showin' the people their sins, an' bein' a sign unto them. Afterwards I told the Lord I wanted another name, 'cause everybody else had two names; and the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people.

But of course, Sojourner Truth never spoke in this Southern dialect. She had never visited the South and never even seen a plantation. Although we have no recordings, she no doubt spoke in the clipped upstate New York accent that she had learned as a child.

In May 1863, a version of Sojourner Truth’s most famous speech was published by Truth’s friend, Frances Dana Gage, but unlike Rev. Robinson’s account of the speech, it was given in exaggerated Southern dialect and featured the question “Ar’nt I a Woman?” Despite its inaccuracy, this was the version of the speech that has been republished over and over again. It is still the one most people remember. We have no recordings of the original speech, but an account of the changes and recordings of the two versions can be found at The Sojourner Truth Project (<https://www.thesojournertruthproject.com/>).

During the Civil War, Sojourner Truth recruited black soldiers for the Union army. After the war she organized a project to resettle former slaves in Kansas but was unable to get government funding for her efforts. She never gave up trying until her death in 1883.

Much of reliable information we have about Sojourner Truth’s life comes from the biography written by Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth; A Life; A Symbol* (1997; rev. 2018). Not only does Painter tell the story of a remarkable woman’s life, she also paints a vivid picture of what life was like for both white and African American people throughout much of the 19th century. Reading Painter’s book gave me a much greater understanding of the painful struggles that convulsed the country at that time. I highly recommend the book, especially because many of the struggles of those years continue today.

An Agitator and Atheist Who Fought for Women's Rights—Ernestine Rose

Ernestine Potowska Rose was an unlikely woman to have an important role in America's woman's suffrage movement. She was a foreigner who spoke English with an accent, a Jew, and a fervent atheist. But during the 1850s, contrary to all expectations, she became one of the most prominent members of the movement.

Rose was born in Poland in 1810, the daughter of a wealthy rabbi who educated her as though she had been a boy. She learned Hebrew and studied the Torah, but from a very early age, she rejected religion and became a committed atheist. After her mother's death, when Ernestine was 16, her father betrothed her to an older man. Shocked and rebellious, the girl went to the Polish court and sued to reject the marriage and have her dowry returned. After winning her case, she left home and never returned to Poland.

Berlin was Rose's first stop and she lived there for several years, supporting herself by making and selling air freshener. Later she moved to London where she became a follower of the social reformer Robert Owen. Owen campaigned for workers' rights, rejected child labor, and supported communal living. Ernestine began her career as a public speaker after Robert Owen invited her to give a talk about his ideas. Her talk was so successful that she soon became a regular speaker at Owenite events.

In 1836, Ernestine married a fellow Owenite, William Rose. Her husband was not Jewish, but, like her, a freethinker and an atheist. He had been trained as a silversmith and jeweler. Soon after their marriage, the Roses moved to the United States, which they considered the best country in the world.

In New York, Ernestine and her husband joined a group of freethinkers who met regularly at the newly built Tammany Hall. While William set up a jewelry business, Ernestine began giving talks about abolition and women's rights. One of the objectives that the group supported was to change a New York State law that excluded everyone who was not Protestant from serving in government posts or being a witness in lawsuits.

As she became active in public affairs, Rose became increasingly aware of the limitations placed on women. In some meetings she was hissed and booed simply for speaking up as a man would. Soon she became an active supporter of the right of women to play an active role in her community. Although a newcomer to New York, she went door-to-door collecting signatures in support of a bill to allow women to own property in their own name. Despite being able to collect only five names, she submitted her petition to the legislature—the first petition ever submitted for women's rights.

The causes of women's rights and the abolition of slavery were closely entwined during the years before the Civil War. In one speech, Rose pointed out that *"The slaves of the South are not the only people that are in bondage. All women are excluded from the enjoyment of that liberty which your Declaration of Independence asserts to be the inalienable right of all."*

In 1849, Rose joined Lucretia Mott for an anti-slavery speaking tour through upstate New York. Although many reformers based their opposition to slavery on Christian teaching, Mott was a radical Quaker who believed truth was found within the individual rather than in any church. She declared herself a heretic who had no difficulty accepting atheists who fought for the causes she herself supported. She and Rose remained lifelong friends.

During the 1850s, the women's right movement grew in strength. The first major conference was held in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1850. The Convention, designed to address "Women's Rights, Duties and Relations", was organized by women who knew Rose, but her name was not on the invitation. She kept a rather low profile because her atheism did not fit in with the attitudes of most of the organizers. Every one of the speakers except Rose specifically mentioned the Christian and Biblical roots of women's rights in their talks. Nonetheless, Rose was an invited speaker and her contributions were widely praised. She was also elected to the important Business Committee.

Ernestine Rose became a friend and colleague of many of the women most active in the women's right movement, especially Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, as well as Lucretia Mott. During the 1850s, Rose worked constantly for the women's movement. By 1856, she had given speeches in 25 of the 31 states and was always in demand. She did not take money for her speeches, but was supported by her husband William, who remained her most devoted companion. Nonetheless, her atheism and the fact that she was foreign born set her apart from most of the other activists. She was sometimes accused of being too radical, as when she talked of supporting education for women and mentioned that uneducated girls were often forced to turn to prostitution. And she dared to support a speaker who talked, in guarded terms, about the importance of contraception in furthering women's rights. Any mention of sex in a woman's rights meeting raised accusations of supporting free love.

Despite her valuable contribution to the women's rights movement, Ernestine Rose must have felt somewhat estranged from many other activists. Her health was always poor, and after the Civil War, she became a less frequent speaker. The War had unleashed a wave of religious fervor in America and the freethinker groups with whom Rose felt at home dwindled away. Anti-Semitism was more openly expressed, and Rose sometimes felt called upon to oppose it publicly.

After the war, Rose and her husband visited Europe several times. Eventually, the couple moved permanently to England. Her American friends, Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony, urged her to return to the United States, but after William Rose died in 1882, Ernestine refused to leave England again. It seems likely that she felt more at home in Europe than she did in postwar America. When she died in 1892, she received many honors in both England and America, but she was often left out of official histories of the women's movement and was gradually forgotten.

If you want to know more about Ernestine Rose, an excellent biography by Bonnie S. Anderson called *The Rabbi's Atheist Daughter* (2016) is available in many libraries.

The Scandal-prone Suffragist—Victoria Woodhull

The struggle to give American women the right to vote lasted more than a century. Some of the women who joined this fight have become American icons, but others kept up the fight in spite of being marginalized for belonging to a different race, a different religion, or a different nationality than most of the suffrage leaders. Victoria Woodhull was one of those. Her problem in being accepted arose because she insisted on being honest about her sex life—she believed in a woman's right to divorce an abusive or unfaithful husband. She also published information about the sex lives of some highly respected men.

Born in Ohio in 1838, Victoria Woodhull grew up in an unstable and impoverished family. She declared she had been “a child without a childhood” because her father had put his daughters to work as soon as he realized they could tell fortunes and claim healing powers. Victoria escaped from him by running away at 15 to get married. Unfortunately, the husband she chose was as shiftless as her father. He quickly became an alcoholic and a philanderer. Fed up with his neglect and dependence, Victoria divorced him and decided to make life on her own terms with her two children.

Some women in those circumstances might have struggled to maintain respectability by turning to teaching, but respectability was not high on the list of Victoria's priorities. She had discovered Spiritualism and believed in her power to foresee events to come. Her sister Tennessee was also a clairvoyant and both sisters were quite willing to use their talents as well as their sex appeal to earn money. Both were at various times accused of being prostitutes, but they were clever enough to use their sexual availability to their advantage rather than being punished for it. During the late 19th century at a time when a married woman could lose her husband, children, and livelihood by a single slip into adultery, married men were free to consort with prostitutes and enjoy their sexual adventures without losing anything. Tennessee and Victoria claimed the same privilege.

Following Victoria Woodhull's trail offers some tantalizing clues about what 19th century America was like. Victoria was not the only suffragist who believed that spirits speaking from beyond the grave gave them ideas for their campaign for women's rights. Spiritualism, which had started about 1848, the same year the first Women's Rights Convention was held, attracted many American radicals. Campaigners for both abolition of slavery and for women's rights tended to gravitate toward the group because it welcomed new ideas and encouraged individualistic thinking. Victoria Woodhull first gained fame, and made a living, by going into trances and predicting the future. She believed that spirits spoke directly to her and guided her in her life.

Whether or not Victoria found the truth in spiritualism, she certainly found worldly success. At least she, her second husband, Captain Blood, and her sister Tennessee Claflin became rich through their association with Cornelius Vanderbilt. Victoria and her sister met Vanderbilt, whose wife had recently died, when they moved to New York City. Tinnie (as she was called) charmed the elderly Vanderbilt, who had been famous for being attracted to beautiful women. When Victoria began to offer him advice about investments, he decided to set up the two sisters as brokers. The unconventional business attracted many customers and they made a great deal of money. Perhaps it was Victoria's business success that gave her the courage to try political life. She decided to enter the presidential race in the 1872 election.

Victoria Woodhull was the first woman to declare that she wanted to be president of the United States. Her presidential campaign raised questions from the time it started. Whether it was legal or not is still an undecided question. Victoria and other members of her Equal Rights party claimed that women were defined as citizens in the *U.S. Constitution* and they had the right to vote and run for office. She based her claim on the Fourteenth Amendment's provision that "***All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.***" Women are persons and are therefore entitled to vote, Victoria declared. The argument persuaded some people, especially women; however, women had never been allowed to vote whether they were citizens or not.

Victoria Woodhull's bold move electrified voters in 1870. In May 1872, the name of Victoria's People's Party was changed to the Equal Rights Party. The party officially nominated Victoria for president, and she chose Frederick Douglass, the well-known ex-slave and public speaker, as her vice-presidential running mate. (He later said that he had never heard anything about it.) Victoria's candidacy was supported by prominent suffragists including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Isabella Beecher Hooker.

In the end it wasn't the search for voting rights that brought Victoria down, it was the familiar question about sexual purity and scandal. Victoria and her sister had lurid pasts compared to those of the other suffrage leaders, but these respectable women also had secrets to hide. The intrigues and infidelities of prominent men touched the lives of their wives and families. Henry Ward Beecher, a distinguished minister and civic leader, was especially vulnerable. His sister Isabella Beecher Hooker was one of Victoria's strongest supporters, but when rumors about her brother started circulating, she backed away from the campaign.

Victoria Woodhull believed in sexual freedom, as some of the other suffragettes did, but she practiced it more than many others. This made her vulnerable to political opponents who spread stories about her and pilloried her in the press. Thomas Nast in his cartoons made her a special target as "Mrs. Satan". After that cartoon appeared Victoria's political life was dead. Many of her speaking engagements were cancelled, and her supporters fled to other candidates. Embittered by the desertions, Victoria finally printed an article revealing the affairs of Henry Ward Beecher and other leading citizens. This led to her arrest and so she spent Election Day in jail rather than going to vote. Some of the women's suffrage leaders did attempt to vote; Susan B. Anthony cast a ballot, but her vote was not counted, and she was fined \$100 for the attempt.

The 1872 election, which seemed to promise vindication for women's rights, proved to be a miserable failure for the cause. It would be more than forty years before women in the United States finally won the right to vote.

Failing to become president, however, did not stop Victoria Woodhull's progress toward a better life. You can read about her adventures in Myra MacPherson's 2014 biography, *The Scarlet Sisters: Sex, Suffrage, and Scandal in the Gilded Age*.

Furious Fighter for Justice—Ida B. Wells

Although born into slavery in 1862, Ida B. Wells lived most of her life as a free woman. Her parents successfully navigated their new freedom and her father became a skilled carpenter. Unfortunately, both parents died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1878 and Ida, as the oldest of their eight children, struggled to hold the family together. She moved with her young siblings to Memphis, Tennessee, where she was able to find work as a schoolteacher. Eager to express her ideas about race relations as the South adjusted to the post-Civil War society, she gradually assumed a role as journalist. The African American press was flourishing, and she found an eager audience for her articles. Unlike most of the earlier suffrage leaders, she gained fame through the written word rather than through public speaking.

The years when Wells was establishing her professional life, were difficult years in Nashville and throughout the South. The transition to a world without slavery was long and painful. The high hopes of abolitionists that former slaves would be integrated into American society, were destroyed when white Southerners refused to recognize anyone of African descent as an equal. Ida B. Wells's life was shaped by the bitterness of those post-Civil War years, one of the most painful periods in American history.

As a well-educated and respectable teacher, Ida B. Wells expected to be able to move around her community freely on the growing network of trains being developed during the 1880s. Unfortunately, many white Nashville citizens did not want African Americans to travel in the railroad cars with them. Wells's first major clash with authorities occurred in 1884 when she tried to use her first-class railroad ticket in a ladies' car along with many white women. The conductor ordered her to leave the car; she refused. He called reinforcements and it took three men to roughly pull and push Wells out of the car and off the train.

Refusing to accept such treatment, Wells sued the railroad. She won her case and was given \$500 in compensation. Later that judgement was later overturned by the Tennessee Supreme Court, which ruled that the railroad had a right to decide where travelers were allowed to sit. Wells was ordered to pay court costs. From that day on, she was determined to spend her life trying to ensure equal rights for all Americans.

As the former Confederate states fought to keep white men in power, they turned to illegitimate forms of control. Lynching became one of their major weapons to maintain white supremacy. When the owners of an African American grocery store in Memphis were lynched, Wells wrote an editorial in which she urged her people to leave the city. "*There is, therefore, only one thing left to do; save our money and leave a town which will neither protect our lives and property, nor give us a fair trial in the courts, but takes us out and murders us in cold blood when accused by white persons.*" The article outraged many readers and Wells's newspaper office was burned to the ground in retaliation. Wells soon followed her own advice and left Memphis to move north. She never returned.

In the years that followed, Wells embarked on a major anti-lynching campaign. In 1892, she published a pamphlet called *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*. This was followed by an expanded examination of lynching in *The Red Report*, which included pages of statistics documenting the extent of the practice. She soon became a leading voice against lynching. Along with other African American leaders, she campaigned for the passage of a federal anti-lynching law to end the practice.

Despite her efforts, Wells found little support in her campaign to persuade Americans to pass a federal anti-lynching law. Finally, she decided she needed support from England and other European countries. In 1894 she traveled to England on a speaking tour. Frances Willard, president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), was also touring England at the time. Because the WCTU was one of the few women's groups that accepted women of all races, Wells hoped that the two of them could work together to build support for the anti-lynching campaign. Unfortunately, Willard focused her efforts far more on temperance than on stopping lynching and she refused to join enthusiastically in Wells's campaign. The two had a memorable and well-publicized argument with the result that the WCTU never passed an anti-lynching proposal and Wells's impact on English liberals was not as successful as she had hoped.

Wells was a fighter, not a politician, and throughout her life she engaged in battles with leaders of the African American community such as Frederick Douglass and especially Booker T. Washington as well as with women's suffrage leaders. Despite Wells's importance in both the battle for African American rights and in the fight for women's right to vote, she was often denied the honor and acknowledgement she deserved.

In 1913, National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) planned a massive march in Washington D.C. to mark the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson as President. Suffrage leaders from all over the country were invited to attend. Ida B. Wells went as part of the Illinois delegation. To her shock and dismay, the leaders of the event announced at the last minute that only white women would march in the front of the parade. African Americans were asked to walk together at the end of the entire group. Many agreed, but Ida B. Wells refused. She simply did not move back but bided her time and joined the white women as they approached the Capitol. Once more Wells had scored a victory by refusing to surrender.

After the 19th Amendment passed and women finally won the right to vote, Wells continued to fight for Civil Rights and women's rights. There are several good biographies of her, one of the best is *Ida: A Sword among the Lions* by Paula J. Giddings (2008). Its 800 pages may look daunting, but the book gives a real sense of how long and arduous the fight for justice and equality has been in the United States.

Politics and Performance—Alice Paul

Born into a wealthy Quaker family in 1885, Alice Paul followed their long tradition of service to the community. After her early education at a private Quaker school, she graduated from Swarthmore College, which her grandfather had helped to found. Next she moved on to the University of Pennsylvania, hoping to discover how she wanted to spend her life. After trying social work in New York City for a year, she decided that would not be her route. Instead she traveled to England to study at the London School of Economics.

While in London, she met Christabel Pankhurst and her mother Emmeline, two leaders of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), the leading suffragette organization in the UK. Both of the Pankhursts recognized Paul's talent for giving speeches and for organizing. Soon she was invited to join a deputation of women to visit Prime Minister Asquith. The contemptuous response with which the group was met—the women were barred from entering Parliament to present their petition and were threatened with arrest—converted Paul into an enthusiastic supporter of votes for women. She soon agreed to join Christabel for a tour of Scotland and northern England.

As Paul soon learned, the tactics of British suffragettes were far more confrontational than anything American women had tried. In June 1909, Marion Wallace Dunlop staged the first women's hunger strike by refusing to eat until she and the others were granted status as political prisoners. Dunlop soon grew weak from hunger and authorities were afraid to keep her in prison and so released her early. Other suffragettes realized that the hunger strike was an effective weapon to draw attention and support to their movement.

When a group of suffragettes, including Paul, were arrested after attempting to disrupt a speech by Lloyd George, they were arrested and ordered to pay fines or go to prison. All of them chose prison. They were denied status as political prisoners and ordered to change into prison uniforms. When they refused to comply, they were stripped naked by female guards. This, of course, led to a hunger strike. As the women grew weaker and visibly lost weight, authorities feared that a death would reflect badly upon the government. Finally, doctors were brought in to forcibly feed the women through tubes inserted into their noses. After five days of this, Alice Paul was released; others were freed during the next few days. All of the women were weakened by the ordeal and Paul suffered for years afterward from the physical effects of the force feeding.

Now completely dedicated to the cause of suffrage, Paul decided it was time to return to America and work for the cause there. She sailed back home in 1910 to the great relief of her mother who had been fretting for weeks over when she would return. Instead of plunging immediately into suffrage work, Paul decided to re-enroll in the University of Pennsylvania to work on a doctorate. While she wrote her dissertation on women's legal status in the United States, Paul also spoke to Quaker groups about her suffragist activities. She soon joined the American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and became an influential member.

Although NAWSA had chosen to fight for suffrage on a state-by-state basis, Alice Paul advocated attempting to pass a federal women's suffrage amendment as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had advocated years earlier. A major factor in choosing to aim for the

state-by-state was to keep the support of Southern states, many of which wanted to maintain their repression of all African American voters, both men and women.

Alice Paul's first major project was a suffrage parade held on March 13, 1913, the day before Woodrow Wilson's first inauguration. Suffrage groups from all over the country sent representatives to Washington to participate in what was planned as a triumphant march up Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House. Paul worked hard to ensure that the parade was given permission to use that major street, despite attempts by the DC authorities to move the group to a less conspicuous location. Eventually Paul got her way and even obtained the promise of the police commissioner to keep other traffic off the parade route.

At the last minute, suffrage delegations from the various states were told that their groups should be separated by race with African Americans at the rear of the procession and white women up front. This was an effort to keep the support of Southern states, but the order was ignored by a few marchers including Ida B. Wells who triumphantly walked at the head of the Illinois delegation with the white women. There is some confusion about whether or not Alice Paul supported the segregation decision.

Despite all the planning, the march did not go as expected. The event was led by mounted suffrage leaders, most notably Inez Milholland riding a white horse, a scene that was described by the *New York Times* as "one of the most impressively beautiful spectacles ever staged in this country". Despite their promises, the authorities provided no police protection and people crowded onto the street holding up the parade and preventing women from moving. Police stood by doing nothing. Finally, National Guard troops and Boy Scouts as well as some male volunteers were able to clear the street and allow the women to finish their march.

The 1913 procession was a triumph for the suffrage women. More than half a million people are estimated to have watched it, but the stain of the segregated march has lingered. The event is a sad comment on the contrasting event led by Lucretia Mott in 1838 during which the women of both races linked arms and walked together out of a Philadelphia meeting to evade hecklers in the group.

The 1913 march succeeded in bringing suffrage to the forefront of publicity, but years of continuing agitation and political maneuvering were needed before a national suffrage bill was finally passed in 1920. You can read more about Alice Paul's long fight to get votes for women in *Alice Paul: Claiming Power* (2014) by J.D. Zahniser and Amelia R. Fry.

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About the author

In addition to writing the blog *teacupsandtyrants.com*, Adele Fasick is also the author of the **Charlotte Edgerton Mysteries**, which take place during the turbulent 1840s when new and radical ideas were spreading across America and Europe.

Death in Utopia introduces Charlotte Edgerton, a young immigrant living in a Utopian community in Massachusetts. When a mysterious death shatters her peaceful world, she struggles to save the community as well as her own dream of a new life.

Death Visits a Bawdy House moves on to New York City, known as Sin City because of the many prostitutes who ply their trade on Broadway. A series of murders leads Charlotte and her new husband, Daniel, to try to track down the serial killer who preys on young girls from the country trying to survive in a dangerous city.

Death Calls at the Palace takes us to London in 1846. Times are troubled—revolutionaries demand a more equal society and threaten to kill their young Queen. Dark-skinned strangers from the other side of the world arouse fear and scorn. The mysterious death of a young servant, followed by the kidnapping of a friend's wife lead Charlotte and Daniel to investigate the bitter anger at the root of the violence.

Death Enters the Convent takes place in 1848, a year of revolutions across Europe. When Charlotte and Daniel move to Florence, Italy, they discover mysterious forces are seeking to disrupt the eternal city. What secrets are hidden behind the ancient walls of a peaceful convent? Will Charlotte be able to discover them in time to save the nuns and the works of art they have sheltered for centuries?

All four books are available at Amazon.com in ebook and print format.