



100 WOMEN'S
SUFFRAGE
VIRGINIA CENTENNIAL

Final Report of Commemoration Activities

Submitted on
January 19, 2021

Submitted by
**VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF
HISTORY & CULTURE**

Executive Summary

In 2017 the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia established a task force of citizen members and state legislators to plan and lead the Commonwealth in commemorating the centennial anniversary of women's right to vote in 2020 – the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC), the state's history museum and oldest cultural institution, was named the lead organizing partner, with the support and collaboration of The Library of Virginia (LVA).

In preparation for 2020, the VMHC, in concert with the LVA, and with the guidance of the task force, prepared a robust commemorative strategy that focused on three areas of work:

- I. K-12 educational programming:** themed, curriculum-based programming for teachers and students, digital distance learning broadcasts, and lectures and symposia;
- II. Civic engagement:** voter registration events, themed events held on patriotic holidays, special publications, and women's history artifact collecting initiatives;
- III. Economic development and tourism:** themed museum exhibitions, traveling panel displays, and an online statewide calendar of events and sites of interest.

Of course, just as the commemoration year kicked-off, the arrival of COVID-19 forced an unexpected, immediate, and comprehensive alteration to commemoration plans. Despite the dramatic disruption of an historic health and financial crisis, the commemoration proceeded.

With thoughtfulness, and in close collaboration with the LVA, the VMHC identified a path forward by reinforcing activities that could safely and reasonably continue, as well as reallocating time and resources to new opportunities that would allow for the most practical and meaningful form by which to mark this important anniversary.

The following pages highlight the **commemorative exhibitions, traveling panel shows, educational activities, digital outreach, publications, partnership films, public events, and collecting initiatives** that were successfully produced over the course of the past year.

While very different than originally envisioned, the commemoration – with a modest mix of state and private support – resulted in **impressive statewide engagement, millions of media impressions, new statewide partnerships, and a lasting legacy through enduring educational resources, ongoing programming, and new museum collections and archives.**

Women's Suffrage Task Force Members

(as of the Task Force's completion, January 1, 2021):

Virginia House of Delegates:

Delegate Betsy B. Carr, Chair

Delegate Carrie E. Coyner

Delegate Marcia "Cia" S. Price

Virginia Senate:

Senator Adam P. Ebbin, Vice Chair

Senator Barbara A. Favola

Citizen Members:

Martha Jallim-Hall

Emily McCoy

Connie M. Meyer

Margaret Vanderhye

Sandra Treadway, Librarian of Virginia

Jamie Bosket, VMHC President & CEO



Commemorative Exhibitions

We Demand: Women's Suffrage in Virginia

Organized by the Library of Virginia, *We Demand: Women's Suffrage in Virginia* tells the full, but little known, story of the campaign for woman suffrage in a key southern state where traditional views about women (and much else) held sway. Despite the challenges they faced, Virginia suffragists created an effective state organization, the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, that coordinated the efforts of scores of local chapters located not only in urban areas but surprisingly in remote and rural areas of the state as well. *We Demand* explores the divergent opinions of white Virginia suffragists as they debated whether their goal should be an amendment to the state or to the federal constitution and whether their tactics should rely on persuasion or militancy. Some Virginia suffragists joined the more radical Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (now the National Woman's Party) and actively participated in demonstrations in Washington, D.C., where they were arrested and jailed for their efforts. In a state that had substantially disenfranchised its black male citizens, African American women had to work more quietly than their white counterparts to avoid a backlash that might jeopardize their cause. Their contributions to the suffrage movement in Virginia have often been overlooked. *We Demand* presents their efforts on behalf of social justice and suffrage as an important part of the story.



Commemorative Exhibitions

We Demand: Women's Suffrage in Virginia



Opened in early 2020, *We Demand: Women's Suffrage in Virginia* had to be temporarily closed to the public due to COVID-19. However, once reopened, its run was extended through May 28, 2021. In addition, two traveling panel versions of *We Demand* were created for statewide use.



Traveling Panel Display Tour Schedule:

3/2/20-4/11/20	Danville Public Library
7/6/20-8/15/20	Fairfax Museum & Visitors Center
9/28/20-11/7/20	Slover Library (Norfolk)
10/12/20-11/21/20	Henrico County Public Library (Varina Branch)
11/9/20-12/19/20	Galax-Carroll Regional Library
11/23/20-1/2/21	Pamunkey Regional Library (Mechanicsville)
2/21/20-1/30/21	Alexandria Public Library (Burke Branch)
1/4/21-2/13/21	Henrico County Public Library (Fairfield Branch)
2/1/21-3/13/21	Historical Society of Western VA
2/15/21-3/27/21	Loudoun County Public Library
3/15/21-4/24/21	Henrico County Public Library (Tuckahoe Branch)
3/29/21-5/8/21	Lynchburg Museum
4/26/21-6/5/21	Handley Regional Library System (Stephens City)
5/10/21-6/19/21	Buchanan County Public Library
6/7/21-7/17/21	Central Rappahannock Regional Library (Howell)
7/19/21-8/28/21	Waynesboro Historical Society
8/30/21-10/9/21	Shenandoah County Public Library
10/11/2021-11/20/2021	Portsmouth Public Library (Churchland)



While *We Demand* was forced to be closed at the LVA, a video tour of the exhibition was made available online.



Commemorative Exhibitions

Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women's Suffrage to Today

Organized by the Virginia Museum of History & Culture, *Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women's Suffrage to Today* recognized a century of women's social and political activism in the Commonwealth and underscored the importance of civic engagement in a democracy. The exhibition highlighted the efforts and impact of ten female change-makers, including suffragists, officeholders, community organizers, educators, and social reformers. The exhibition began with the suffrage movement and featured Richmond native Maggie Lena Walker (1864-1934) as a leading voice for black suffrage and political involvement in the face of widespread discrimination. Other key figures included Dr. Zenobia Gilpin—one of the first black female physicians to practice in Richmond despite not being able to attend medical school in the Commonwealth—Del. Yvonne B. Miller, the first woman to be elected to the Virginia legislature, and Alice Carlotta Jackson Stuart—the first black applicant to the University of Virginia. Two civil rights warriors from Virginia included Evelyn Butts, a seamstress from Norfolk who challenged the poll tax, and Ella Baker who was involved in the NAACP, SCLC, and founded SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) in 1960. The continuing presence of Virginia's Indian tribes is represented by Chief Anne Richardson (b. 1956)—the first female chief of a Virginia tribe since the 18th century—who was instrumental in achieving federal recognition of the Rappahannock and continues to fight for the preservation of native lands and native traditions. Using a range of strategies and working for a diverse array of causes, these and other women brought about positive change in their communities, the Commonwealth, and the nation.



Commemorative Exhibitions

Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women's Suffrage to Today

Opened in early 2020, *Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women's Suffrage to Today* was also temporarily closed to the public due to COVID-19. However, once reopened, its run was extended through November of 2020. In addition, a traveling panel version of *Agents of Change* was created for ongoing statewide use.

During its public closure, *Agents of Change* was made widely available via a full virtual version (shown below).

Traveling Panel Display Tour Schedule (preliminary):

2/1/21 – 3/13/21

3/15/21 – 4/24/21

8/30/21 – 10/9/21

10/11/21 – 11/20/21

Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center
Shenandoah County Public Library
Central Rappahannock Regional Library (Howell)
Buchanan County Public Library

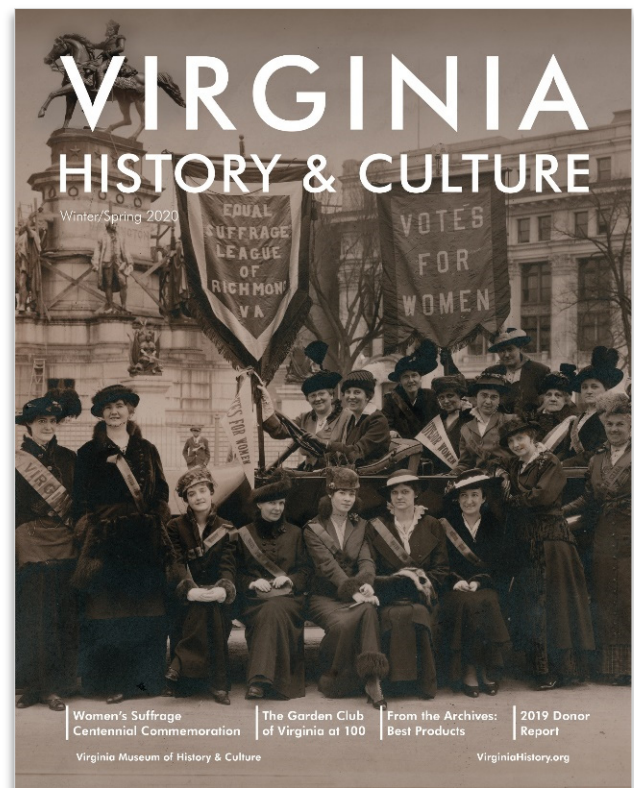
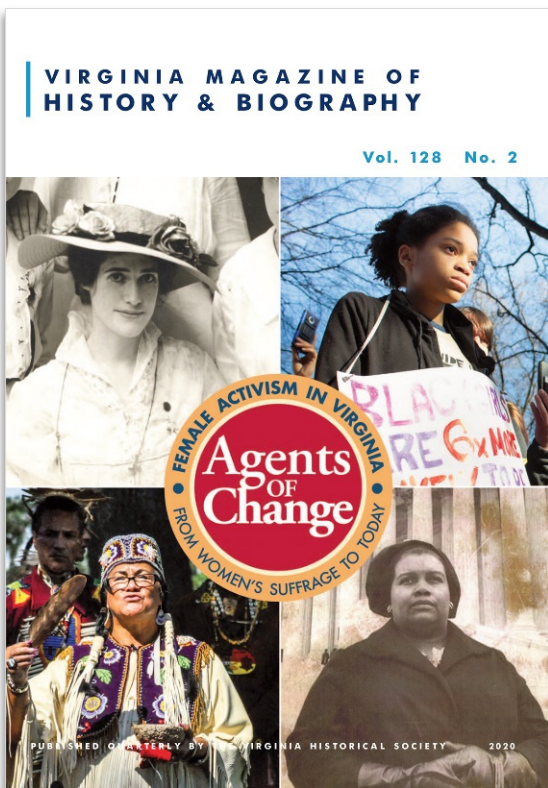
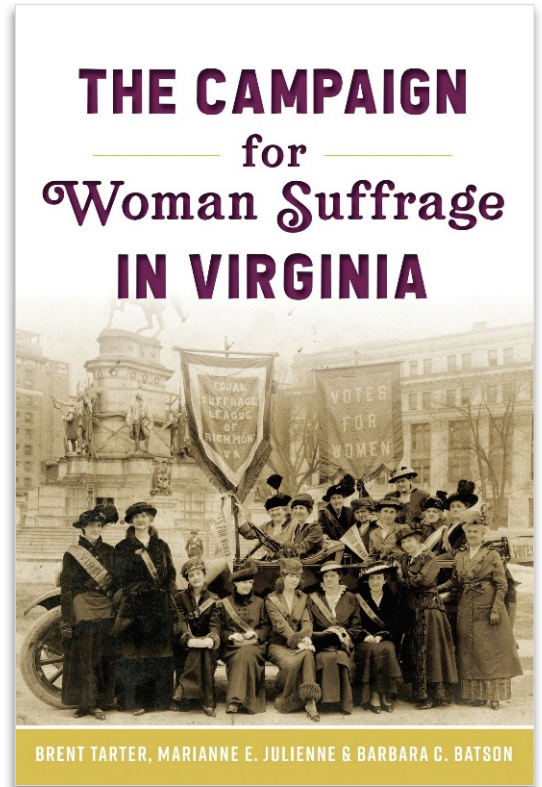


Commemorative Publications

The Library of Virginia contracted with The History Press to publish *The Campaign for Woman Suffrage in Virginia*, a 208-page history that for the first time reveals how women created two statewide organizations to win the right to vote.

VMHC's *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography* is one of the oldest history publications in the nation. It has continuously published scholarly articles and reviews of Virginia and other history uninterrupted for more than 127 years. A special commemorative edition devoted to the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commemoration was distributed to thousands of households across Virginia and beyond.

Also, the VMHC devoted an issue of its popular magazine, *Virginia History & Culture*, to spotlight the centennial of women's suffrage. This print piece was also distributed to thousands of households, including VMHC's vast membership.

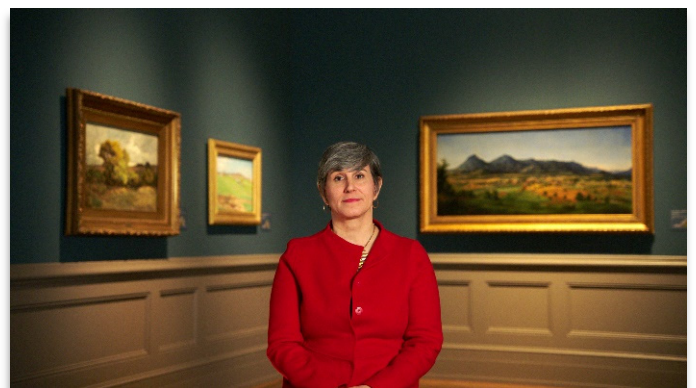
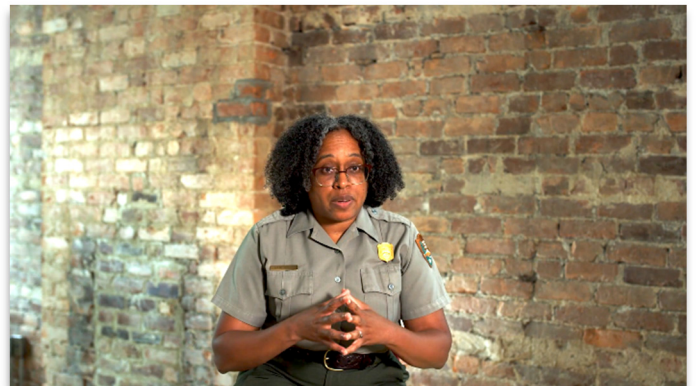


Partnership Films

These Things Can Be Done

These Things Can Be Done, a new, one-hour documentary produced by Boedeker Films and Virginia's Home for Public Media (VPM) in coordination with the VMHC, highlights the often-overlooked narrative of women's suffrage in Virginia. Brought to life through rare archival footage, photographs, oral histories, radio broadcasts, and interviews with historians, descendants of suffragists, and modern activists, *These Things Can Be Done* was broadcast widely in 2020 on various PBS affiliates.

The documentary remains available on Amazon Prime, PBS, or VPM's YouTube Channel.



Partnership Films

Turning Point Suffragist Memorial

While the planned event collaboration for the dedication of the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial in Lorton, Virginia, was not possible due to COVID-19, the VMHC was able to support the production of two short documentaries used to mark the centennial in August 2020. These two films detail the history of the passage of the 19th Amendment, outline the purpose of the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, and explain the significance of the White House fence – a portion of which will be located at the memorial.



Both films are available online at suffragistmemorial.org.

An artistic illustration of the National Women's Suffrage Memorial. It shows a large, circular stone structure with columns in the center, surrounded by a paved walkway and green trees. In the foreground, there is a stone wall with a gate and a sign that reads "BOUNDARY SHOULD BE AT WHITE". A person is walking on the path. The text "NATIONAL WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE YEAR" is overlaid in large, bold, purple letters.

**NATIONAL
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
YEAR**

AUGUST 2020 – AUGUST 2021



Educational Outreach

Originally envisioned as a statewide digital initiative, much of the commemoration's planned educational outreach forged ahead through the challenges of a global pandemic. **Distance learning programs were made available to thousands of students through the VMHC's award-winning distance learning program, HistoryConnects.** Free of charge and tailored for Virginia Department of Education standards of learning, 45-minute interactive classroom lessons focused on women as agents of change in Virginia's history.

Virginia History Day, a statewide social studies contest for 4th through 12th graders, provides educators and students with project-based learning opportunities. 2020's history competition, which was hosted virtually, was tailored to women's history as part of the National History Day theme, "Breaking Barriers." Commemoration awards were given for district and state contests to the Virginia students whose projects exemplified quality scholarship on women who have made a difference in Virginia. **Thousands of Virginia students participated, representing all regions of the Commonwealth.**



The VMHC and LVA offered digitally distributed resource packets and lesson plans highlighting primary and secondary sources from VMHC and LVA collections. Also, the VMHC and LVA coordinated professional development opportunities for K-12 educators focused on the history and legacy of women in Virginia.

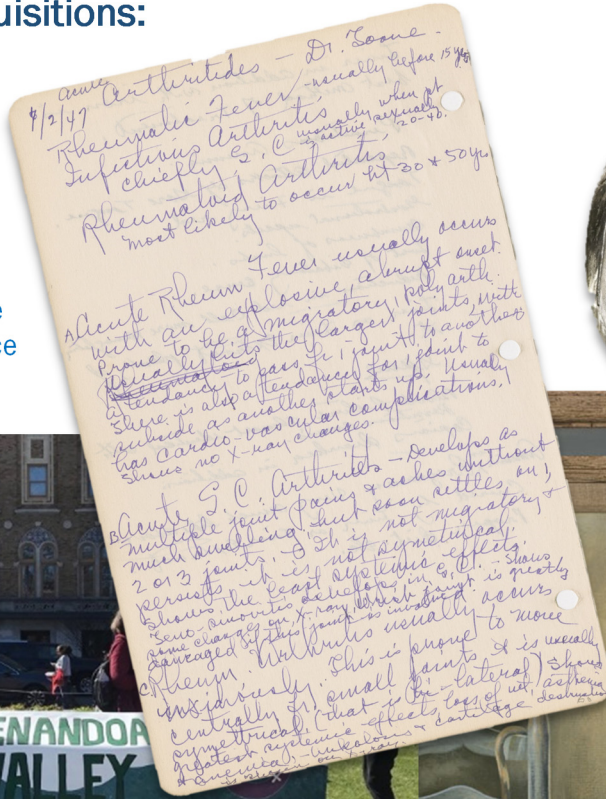


Collecting Initiative

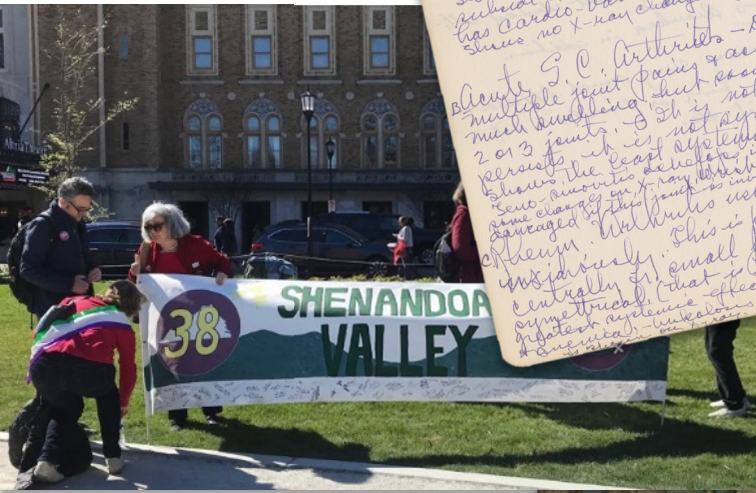
To mark this important commemoration, and ensure it has a lasting impact, the VMHC led a statewide collecting initiative to gather objects and archives that will help document and tell the story of women as agents of change throughout Virginia's history and related social and political activism. This proactive effort focused on the acquisition of materials and oral histories documenting inspirational stories that will be made accessible to future generations for research, exhibition, and online in digital format.

A Sampling of Acquisitions:

Pages from the medical journal of Dr. Zenobia Gilpin (1904-1948), a champion of public health in Virginia in the 1920s and '30s and founding member of the Virginia State Conference NAACP.



Susan B. Anthony necklace and political campaign button from the collection of Virginia activist Flora B. Crater (1914-2009), who successfully lobbied Congress to pass the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972.



Banner created by women activists in the Shenandoah Valley celebrating Virginia becoming the 38th and final state needed to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment in 2020.



Portrait of artist and Equal Suffrage League of Virginia co-founder Adèle Clark (1882-1983) painted by William Kendall in 1972.



Bracelet worn by The Honorable Ghazala Hashmi, the first Muslim woman elected to the Virginia State Senate, during her swearing-in ceremony in January 2020.



Commemorative Programs

As the last in-person large event hosted at the museum prior to the arrival of COVID in February, The First Lady of Virginia hosted a gathering of several hundred guests, including women featured in the exhibition and their family members, to mark the opening of VMHC's exhibition, *Agents of Change*.



To mark the centennial anniversary date of the 19th Amendment in August, the VMHC, in partnership with the League of Women Voters, hosted a socially distanced public event on the front lawn of the museum. Speakers included the Governor of Virginia, Mayor of Richmond, Librarian of Virginia, and representatives and guests of the League of Women Voters.



Commemorative Programs

Agents of Change Commemorative Photograph

Inspired by the popular historic image of suffrage advocates from 1915 at the Virginia state capitol, the VMHC recreated this scene with a commemorative photo featuring a diverse group of women, “agents of change,” from across Virginia, which fostered new statewide relationships and garnered extensive media attention. Additional programming featuring participants in this commemorative photo will take place throughout 2021.



We would not be commemorating the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage today without the courageous activism of thousands of women across Virginia willing to challenge the status quo.

- Sandra G. Treadway,
Commemorative Photo Participant

Activism is essential to our society because democracy is not a spectator sport.

- Regina H. Boone,
Commemorative Photo Participant



Commemoration Promotion & Digital Outreach

To promote this meaningful anniversary, the VMHC created a dedicated landing page for the commemoration, VirginiaHistory.org/2020. On this page, visitors could find details of the commemoration, a comprehensive calendar of statewide events, and information on historic sites across the Commonwealth that relate to the history of women's suffrage.

In addition, the VMHC used its social media channels to promote the commemoration and engage a broad audience. The VMHC also managed a modest campaign of earned and paid promotion garnering some 1.2 million earned impressions and approximately 30 million paid media impressions.



VIRGINIA AND THE NINETEENTH AMENDMENT

Voting is the lynchpin of a democracy, but who gets to vote has always been hotly contested in America. As first adopted, the U.S. Constitution did not guarantee universal suffrage—various groups have fought for this right throughout our history. Women gained the right to vote only after a hard-fought battle that began in 1848.

In the late 1800s, the exponential growth of urbanization and industrialization across the nation was accompanied by a wave of social and political reform movements. Virginia women fought for voting rights so that they would have the power to enact positive changes in education, public health, labor rights, and other causes they supported.

After years of defeat in enacting a statewide women's suffrage amendment, some ESL members grew impatient and joined the more militant Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (later the National Woman's Party, NWP) which was pressuring Congress and U.S. president Woodrow Wilson to enact a federal suffrage amendment. When the United States entered the First World War in 1917, mainstream suffragists redirected their attention to the war effort, but the NWP picketed in front of the White House. Pauline Adams, president of the Norfolk branch of the NWP, was among a number of these so-called "Silent Sentinels" arrested in 1917 and sent to federal prison in Lorton, Virginia. The harsh treatment of these women in prison garnered public support for suffrage and pressured President Wilson to declare support for a constitutional amendment.



Lila (Maecade) Valentine (1865–1921), president of the Equal Suffrage League, championed causes of health and education reform. Ironically, she never cast a ballot. Too ill to go to the polls in 1920, she died without ever exercising the franchise. (VMHC 1983.80)

When Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment in June 1919, the ESL lobbied Virginia's legislators to ratify the amendment, but the politicians did not relent. On August 18, 1920, Tennessee became the necessary thirty-sixth state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, making female suffrage the law of the land. Virginia women soon exercised their right to vote in the November elections, but Virginia's General Assembly stubbornly refused to ratify it until doing so symbolically in 1952.

This year marks the centennial of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Its ratification radically redefined the meaning of American democracy by banning gender-based restrictions on voting and heralded a new age of female participation in American civic life—a milestone that merits both celebration and critical reflection.



Although earlier attempts to organize suffrage activists failed, a small group of civic-minded women formed the Equal Suffrage League (ESL) of Virginia in 1909. Lila Maecade Valentine, as the first president of the league, traveled throughout the state to raise public awareness and build support for women's suffrage. Other prominent participants included authors Ellen Glasgow and Mary Johnston, education activist Mary Munford, and artists Nora Houston and Adele Clark. Antisuffragists formed a counter organization in 1912 to refute the league's arguments for voting rights, but by 1919 the ESL counted 32,000 members across the state. It was also the largest suffrage organization in the South.

The issue of race complicated debates over suffrage in Virginia and across the nation. The ESL, like many suffrage organizations, did not admit black members out of fear of alienating white support. And antisuffrage groups also stoked fears about empowering black women with voting privileges. Ultimately abandoned by the ESL, black suffragists formed their own organizations and fought for voting rights within African American communities. *The St. Luke Herald*, of which Richmond banker and civic leader Maggie Walker was managing editor, kept the issue before its readers. Walker and other black suffragists like Ora Brown Stokes and Janie Porter Barrett also spoke about the necessity of having the ballot to force those in power to respond to the concerns of African American women.

NEW VPM DOCUMENTARY



THESE THINGS CAN BE DONE: WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN VIRGINIA

COMMEMORATING THE CENTENNIAL OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Through Nov 8

Reserve your ticket at VirginiaHistory.org

'Agents of Change' exhibit marks century of female activism in Va.

By The Associated Press.

A century of female political and social advocacy in Virginia is celebrated in a new exhibit at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture in Richmond.

"Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women's Suffrage to Today," which opened March 8, features artifacts from the museum's collections, new acquisitions made through a major collecting initiative and rarely seen items on loan from private individuals. It is intended to honor change-makers who have brought about positive change in their communities, Virginia and the nation.

In a news release, Museum Collections Curator Karen Sherry said the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 marked the culmination of a concerted fight for women's suffrage and heralded a new age of female participation in American civic life. She said the stories in the exhibit underscore the importance of



Through Sept. 27, visitors to the Virginia Museum of History & Culture can learn about women's participation in civic life through the "Agents of Change" exhibition.

civic engagement.

Along with the exhibition, a special photograph will be on display. It is a re-creation of an iconic photo of suffragists from 1915 featuring modern-day female activists from Virginia. The photo will be displayed at the museum throughout the year and

reproduced in a limited-edition print series.

The exhibition will be on view through Sept. 27 at the museum, which is located at 428 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd. A donation of \$5 to \$10 is requested. For more information, visit virginiahistory.org or call (804) 340-1800.

VIRGINIAHISTORY.ORG/2020

SPECIAL EXHIBITION

We Demand: Women's Suffrage in Virginia at the Library of Virginia through May 28, 2021, and online at edu.liv.virginia.gov/WeDemand

SPECIAL EXHIBITION

Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women's Suffrage to Today at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture through November 1, 2020, and online at VirginiaHistory.org/AgentsOfChange

STUDENT & TEACHER RESOURCES

Live and recorded distance learning programs, lesson plans and more at VirginiaHistory.org/Suffrage

DOCUMENTARY

These Things Can Be Done at Virginia Public Media or on Amazon Prime SuffragistFilm.com



“The work is just begun, and must be kept up so that the voters of the state shall become educated to the duty of casting their votes...”

- Naomi Cohn, founder of the Virginia Women’s Council of Legislative Chairmen of State Organizations



About The Virginia Museum of History & Culture

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture was founded in 1831 as the Virginia Historical Society. Its first president was Chief Justice John Marshall. Its first member was President James Madison. Older than the Smithsonian Institution and half of the states of our nation, this organization has devoted nearly two centuries to collecting and preserving the artifacts of our past to share the far-reaching history of the Commonwealth of Virginia with the world.

Today, this nationally respected museum and research organization cares for one of the largest history collections in the United States, totaling near nine million items. The VMHC, the sole institution of its kind dedicated to telling the whole story of Virginia, welcomes more than 100,000 guests annually to its headquarters facility in Richmond and reaches hundreds of thousand of students and adults across the state and beyond.

Our Mission

Connecting people to America's past through the unparalleled story of Virginia. By collecting, preserving, and interpreting the Commonwealth's history, we link past with present and inspire future generations.

