

A graphic featuring a central orange banner with the text "Diversity Spotlight" in bold black font. Below the banner are several stylized hands in various colors (blue, yellow, orange, red, purple, green, pink) reaching upwards, symbolizing diversity and unity.

Diversity Spotlight

March is Women's History Month

Women's history month began as women's history week in 1978, during the week of March 8, International women's day. In 1980, U.S. president Jimmy Carter declared the week of March 8 National Women's History Week, urging everyone in the United States to participate. According to Carter, "too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength, and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well." Seven years later in 1987 women's history week became women's history month. This year's theme is "Valiant Women of the Vote" and it celebrates the struggle for equal voting rights for women.

When our country was founded, the right to vote and have a voice in deciding the laws of our country was limited only to men who owned property. Women did not have many rights and were discouraged from going to college, owning property or exercising any independence. In 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized a convention regarding women's rights including the right to run for office and to vote. At the time, women were not even allowed into Congress to speak. Twenty years later, Stanton and Susan B. Anthony formed an association that urged Congress to allow women to argue their cause in front of them. Congress refused to hear them. During President Grover Cleveland's speech dedicating the statue of Liberty in 1886, a boat full of women sailed past, led by activist Lillie Devereux Blake holding a giant sign that read "American Women Have no Liberty". Over the next 70 years, women began to organize, rally and protest, pushing for their voices to be heard and to have the right to vote granted universally. Women supporting the right to vote were called "Suffragettes."

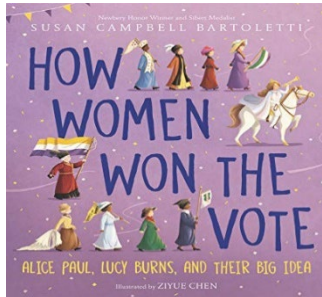
Women continued to march and make their voices heard, but it was not until World War I in 1917 that the President, Woodrow Wilson, began to support women's suffrage. During the war, men were deployed to fight and women stepped in, doing work typically done by men. In 1918 Wilson proposed the 19th amendment to Congress, which, if ratified by $\frac{3}{4}$ of states, would extend voting rights to women. Illinois was one of the first states to sign on right away, and in 1920, Tennessee became the 36th and final state needed to pass the amendment and it was officially ratified, nearly 80 years after the first women began to organize. Last year in 2020, we celebrated the centennial of the women's right to vote, but the fight continues. Inspired by the women's suffrage movement, women continue to push for equal pay and equal representation for all women, regardless of skin color, national origin, age or ability.

Resources to get you started!



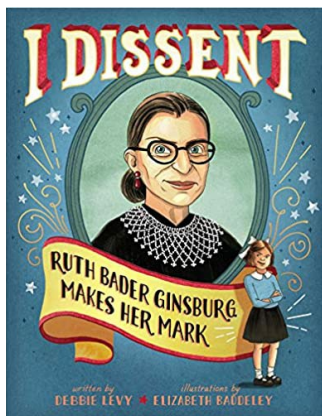
“Finish the Fight!: The Brave and Revolutionary Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote” By Veronica Chambers and the Staff of the New York Times.

Who was at the forefront of women's right to vote? We know a few famous names, like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, but what about so many others from diverse backgrounds—black, Asian, Latinx, Native American, and more—who helped lead the fight for suffrage? On the hundredth anniversary of the historic win for women's rights, it's time to celebrate the names and stories of the women whose stories have yet to be told.



“How Women Won the Vote: Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, and Their Big Idea” By Susan Campbell Bartoletti

From Newbery Honor medalist Susan Campbell Bartoletti and in time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in America comes the page-turning, stunningly illustrated, and tirelessly researched story of the little-known DC Women’s March of 1913.



“I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark” By Debbie Levey

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg spent a lifetime fighting for gender equality. She served on the United States Supreme Court until she died last year at age 86.

Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has spent a lifetime disagreeing: disagreeing with inequality, arguing against unfair treatment, and standing up for what’s right for people everywhere. This biographical picture book about the Notorious RBG, tells the justice’s story through the lens of her many famous dissents, or disagreements.

Here is an audio book recording of our nation’s first Second Gentleman, Dr. Douglass Emhoff reading “I Dissent” for national Read Across America Day.

https://www.instagram.com/tv/CL7BnCSHqw1/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Questions? Do you have a topic you would like to see covered in the Diversity Spotlight? Would you like to contribute to the Diversity Spotlight?

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