

Lesson Plan to Accompany Video: Bad Romance: Women's Suffrage

"We women of America tell you that America is not a democracy. Twenty million women are denied the right to vote."

- Alice Paul



Alice Paul, Co- Founder of NWA

Building Background

National Woman's Party (NWP): Founded in 1916 when Alice Paul and others broke away from the NAWSA (National American Women's Suffrage Association) because of differences of opinions about how best to win the right to vote for women in the United States. While NAWSA's leaders believed in a state by state approach, the younger generation of suffragists that made up the majority of the NWP's membership strongly believed in a national Constitutional Amendment that would finally allow all American women to vote.

The National Woman's Party's tactics were seen by many to be radical and militant. Immediately after forming the NWP, Alice Paul and other members targeted the dominant political powers in Washington D.C., especially the Woodrow Wilson's Administration and the Congress. The suffragists held marches and rallies, but most famously, they picketed the White House, placing "Silent Sentinels" at each entrance to the Executive Mansion. Read More about the Sentinels below.

The radical acts of non - violence practiced by these women finally forced the President of the United States to agree to support a Constitutional Amendment enfranchising millions of American Women. All American women, young and old, owe a debt of gratitude to Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, founders of the NWP, who fought valiantly to secure full and equal rights for women.

Non Violent Action in History: While there have been countless examples of protesting an unjust law by means of non violent action throughout history, the 20th century saw the movement become mainstream and more commonly used to address injustice. Mohandas Gandhi used tactics such as marches and sit-ins in the early 1900's. Suffrage activists in Britain copied his non-violent campaigns and used them in their fight for justice. IN the United States, both the NWP and the Civil Rights movements of the 1950s and 60's made wide use of non-violent protest in their fight for social equality.

➡ **Learn More!** Research the meaning and history of these terms commonly associated with the non-violent movement include: **Boycott, Marches, Picketing, and Sit-Ins.**



Who Were the Silent Sentinels? The NWP women who stood outside the entrances to the White House from January, 1917 to June of 1919. These women were directly challenging President Wilson because of his anti-suffrage stance. These Sentinels brought much unwanted attention to the President, especially during World War I. The fact that they continued their protests during the war angered many citizens, and made the women the target of angry men and women, some of whom used violence against them.

[Click here to read more about their protests](#)

[Click here to see the newspaper coverage of the event](#)

(To view links hold ctrl key while clicking on link)

(Wikipedia- silent sentinels) link 1

(New York Times article) Link 2

Weeks of Terror : Time spent in Occoquan



Lucy Burns, pictured at left, was a co-founder of the NWP. She and many other members of the movement were arrested on trumped up charges during their Silent Sentinels protest. Taken to Occoquan Workhouse near Washington, DC, the suffragists were mistreated and abused by the prison staff. Ms. Burns considered herself and all other suffragists at the workhouse “Political Prisoners”, and began a Hunger Strike. Others joined in and public outrage over their treatment grew. This last radical step by these women brought about passage of the 19th Amendment.

(photo courtesy Library of Congress)