



# COLLECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

TEACHERS GUIDE & RESOURCES

## American Democracy

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PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL  
AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



## CREDITS

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American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith was developed by the National Museum of American History and adapted for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.

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## IMAGE AND TEXT CREDITS

All images are from the Virginia Museum of History & Culture collections, except the following: "The First Vote," *Harper's Weekly*, November 16, 1867 (courtesy of the Library of Virginia) used in conjunction with VMHC Object Number: 2010.0074, and "Come, let us take counsel together" Attend NAACP Wartime Conference for Total Peace, Chicago, July 12-16, 1944 (courtesy of the Library of Congress) used in conjunction with VMHC Object Number: 2002.148.5. Much of the text has been modified or used directly from the exhibition script.

## American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith

*American Democracy* Collections in the Classroom is a companion packet to an exhibition at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History that celebrates the bold and radical experiment to test a wholly new form of government. Democracy is still a work in progress, but it is at the core of our nation's political, economic, and social life. This exhibit explores democracy from the Revolution to the present using objects from the Smithsonian's collection, in addition to collection items from the Virginia Museum of History & Culture. Not only famous voices are presented; like democracy itself, the exhibition preserves the voices of everyday people by showcasing campaign materials, protest signs, and a host of other items from everyday life that reflect the promises of American democracy throughout the nation's history. This packet will help you and your students understand various aspects of this great experiment by examining representative primary sources from the VMHC's collection.

### READING AND ANALYZING

#### Background: Primary Source Material

This primary source packet is designed to help familiarize students with a variety of primary source materials from the Smithsonian's exhibition *American Democracy*. The sources included will expose students to a variety of collection materials, including newsletters, speeches, objects, buttons, letters, and pamphlets. Prompt your students to consider the intersections of things like race, gender, and socioeconomic status. When analyzing the materials, keep in mind the origin of the source – was it meant to be public or private? Who is to, and who is it from? Does it contain opinions or facts, and, can you tell the difference? Is it written or illustrated? Is it a paper source or an object? These questions, the material in the corresponding source packet, the contextual information and images, and the guidelines below will provide an avenue for integrating museum collections into the classroom.

## Background: American Democracy

The sources in this packet span four centuries of Virginia history. Within those years, the state underwent a dramatic change in how it defined and enacted democratic principles. These sources reflect the broader changes that occurred on a national level and speak to how individual Americans from a wide variety of backgrounds experienced them.

More than just waging a war of independence, American revolutionaries took a great leap of faith and established a new government based on the sovereignty of the people. It was truly a radical idea that entrusted the power of the nation not in a monarchy but in its citizens. Each generation since continues to question how to form “a more perfect union” around this radical idea.

British colonists inherited a world ruled by kings, hereditary aristocrats, and wealthy gentlemen. Then, in 1776, Americans decided to change that world. They would do without a king or aristocrats. They would create a new government based solely on “the people.” But who would really count as “the people,” and how would it all work? Should wealthy and educated gentlemen still dominate the government? Could a new, representative form of government truly represent the interests and views of common men and women? How should those people participate to make their voices heard? Ever since the Revolution, Americans have debated these vital questions.

When it was established, the United States of America boasted more eligible voters than ever before. But voters still made up just a fraction of the new country’s population. The nation’s founders never envisioned the numbers, classes, sexes, and races of Americans that cast ballots each Election Day. They envisioned a world in which propertied men rose above self-interest and voted on behalf of the rest of “the people.” Many of

“the people,” however, showed a stubborn desire to vote directly to choose their leaders and laws. The result has been reluctant adjustments, contentious struggles, and ongoing negotiations as groups tried to persuade lawmakers, the courts, and their fellow citizens to let them share the power of the polls.

Informal institutions and activities not actually spelled out in the Constitution help make America’s participatory political system possible. State and national parties, nomination and ratification conventions, and intense and elaborate campaigns are examples of the informal processes Americans have adopted that give life and form to the ideas in the Constitution.

The First Amendment of the Constitution established that Congress shall make no law restricting “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Not limiting their participation to electoral politics, individuals and groups with very different resources—on the streets, in back rooms, and through the media of their times—have brought their interests and concerns before the nation. From 18th-century petitioning and mass demonstrations, to formal and informal lobbying of government officials, to electronic letter-writing campaigns, Americans have exercised this very basic democratic right to shape their country beyond the ballot box.

Fulfilling the ideals of American democracy required defining “The People” and determining the meaning of citizenship. Not clearly articulated in the founding documents, these unsettled issues were left for future generations. Some basic questions have long been debated by Americans. How diverse should the citizenry be? Do we need to share a common national story? What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens?

## LIST OF SOURCES

Petition, Virginia House of Burgesses, 1772

Letter, George Washington to Bryan Fairfax, 20 July 1774

Emancipation Document, "Sarah," 1782

Citizenship Certificate, James Scott, 1811

Sugar bowl promoting William Henry Harrison, 1840

Election Ticket, Democratic Party, 1860

Certificate, *The Grand Army of Republicans* issued to James Jones, 1878

Speech, John Randolph Tucker, 1882

Broadside, Results of Equal Suffrage, 1916

Pamphlet, Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics, 1924

Civil Rights Stamp, 1940s

Report, Virginia Voters League, 1944

Political Buttons, 1930s – 1990s

Newsletter, Gay Rights Association, 1970s

Protest Sign, "Women's Rights are Human Rights," 2018

*\*All letters are transcribed as written. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors have been retained.*

## OVERALL DISCUSSION AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

### OBSERVE

1. What do you notice first?
2. Find something small but interesting.
3. What do you notice that you didn't expect? What do you notice that you can't explain? What do you notice now that you didn't earlier?

### REFLECT

1. Where do you think this came from?
2. Why do you think somebody made this? What do you think was happening when this was made?
3. Who do you think was the audience for this item?
4. What tool was used to create this?
5. Why do you think this item is important?
6. If someone made this today, what would be different?
7. What can you learn from examining this?

### QUESTION

1. What do you wonder about...who? what? when? Where? Why? How?

## CONTEXT AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EACH SOURCE

### **Petition, Virginia House of Burgesses, 1772**

VMHC Call Number: Mss4 V81934 a 4

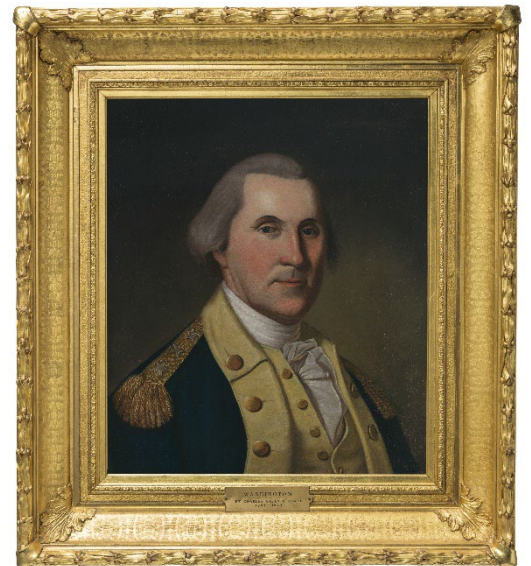
Petitioning involves adding your name, along with others, to an official appeal to a government or authority figure. Petitions have been used for centuries to influence policy makers for those who do not have a direct say in the decision-making process. In this petition signed by members of the Virginia House of Burgesses, they ask King George III to ban the importation of enslaved people to the colonies. However, economic motives, not humanitarian feelings for the enslaved, led them to do so. By the 1770s, a surplus of enslaved people lived in Virginia, and enslavers calculated that the value of these people would rise if the slave trade from Africa ended. The petition was rejected in London.

1. What is the main reason the House of Burgesses gives for wanting to end the importation of slaves from Africa?
2. What are the similarities and differences between this petition and one that might be created for a modern issue today? What tactics do the writers use to make their argument?
3. Why do the writers of this petition use such formal and flowery language? Are there any words that you do not recognize?

### **Letter, George Washington to Bryan Fairfax, 20 July 1774.**

VMHC Call Number: Mss2 W277 c 3

Following the Boston Tea Party in December 1773, the British Parliament passed a series of acts intended to punish Massachusetts for its rebellious actions. Known as the Intolerable Acts in North America, they sparked widespread outrage. Parliament's intention of subduing revolutionary sentiment served as a catalyst for unifying the colonies in opposition. It was within this context in the summer of 1774 that George Washington engaged in correspondence with his friend and neighbor Bryan Fairfax. In this letter, Washington writes to Fairfax after presiding over a committee of Fairfax County citizens that issued a series of resolves opposing British action and calling on a unified colonial response. Washington replies to a letter from Fairfax that called for a more moderate response to the controversy and explains his opposition to Parliament's policies.



George Washington  
(VMHC 1889.5)

1. What is Washington's tone? Is he calm, upset, happy? How can you tell?
2. What is Washington's main point of disagreement with Great Britain?
3. Why would Washington invoke his fear of slavery (pg. 5-6 of letter) when he enslaved dozens of people himself?

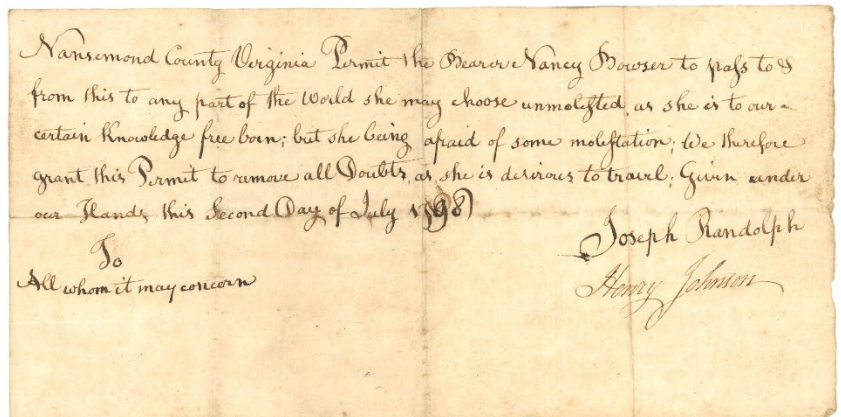
4. What does Washington mean when he says (on pg. 5), “I think the Parliament of Great Britain hath no more Right to put their hands into my Pocket, without my consent, than I have to put my hands into your’s, for money?”

### Emancipation Document, “Sarah,” 1782

VMHC Call Number: Mss3 Su 788 a 5

Revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality—along with growing moral condemnation from some religious denominations—inspired many Americans to reconsider their thoughts on human bondage. Between 1777 and 1804, all the Northern states abolished slavery, either immediately or gradually. In the South, however, slavery boomed. Although Virginia’s state legislature did not consider ending slavery in this period, it passed a law in 1782 making manumission easier by dropping the requirement that slaveowners obtain government approval. By 1806, approximately 10,000 enslaved Virginians were freed. Thousands more self-emancipated by running away. Richard Rowell of Surry County invoked the “natural rights of all mankind” as justification for emancipating one of his enslaved people, a woman named Sarah, who gained her freedom following the submission of this document in August 1782.

1. What are some of the reasons that Richard Roswell gives for emancipating Sarah?
2. What else does the document promise, other than giving Sarah her freedom?
3. What challenges might Sarah face after her emancipation?
4. What opportunities might Sarah have now that she is free?



Freedom Pass for  
Nancy Bowser, 1798  
(VMHC Mss3 Su 788 a 44)

### Citizenship Certificate, James Scott, 1811

VMHC Call Number: Mss2 Sco842 a 1

Congress passed the first Naturalization Act in 1790 and limited the opportunity of citizenship to “free white persons, who have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years.” Compared to contemporary European nations that had literacy, religious, or skill requirements, America was very liberal in who it allowed to become a citizen. However, this welcoming policy completely excluded all non-white people. By the early 1800s, Congress had increased the residency requirement to five years and required new citizens to be “of good moral character.” Between 1783 and 1815, approximately 250,000 European immigrants arrived in the United States. One of these people was James Scott, who successfully received this certificate of citizenship in 1811.

1. How many years had James Scott lived in the United States when his citizenship was granted?
2. Who did Scott have to renounce his allegiance to prior to becoming a citizen?

3. What do you think the court means by “good moral character?” Why is this not more specific?
4. How does this process compare to the immigration process today? What might explain some of the differences?

### Sugar bowl promoting William Henry Harrison, 1840

VMHC Object Number: 2019.36.18

From early elections to today, political campaigns and businesses have distributed or sold all kinds of branded objects in support or opposition to certain candidates. Born in Virginia, William Henry Harrison (1773 – 1841) joined the military and built a life and career in Ohio. As a presidential candidate, he was depicted as a man of the people from the rough and tumble West who was content to drink hard cider in a log-cabin, as shown on this sugar bowl. His opponent, president Martin Van Buren (1782 – 1862), was depicted as a snob. Harrison won the election, but died 31 days after his inauguration.



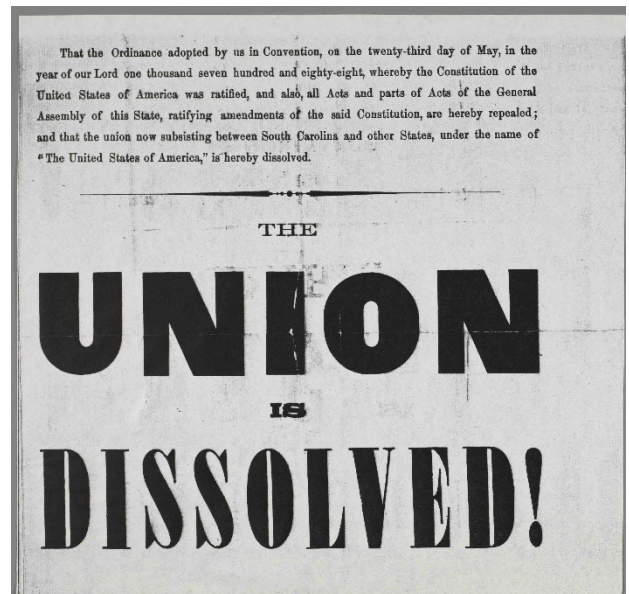
Painting, William Henry Harrison  
 (VMHC 1992.249)

1. What features or things do you see depicted on the bowl?
2. Does this depiction of the log cabin/frontier look positive or negative?  
 Do you think this is an accurate portrayal of frontier life? Why or why not?
3. Can you think of any other politicians who have had a particular persona during their campaign/presidency?
4. Are you surprised that a sugar bowl can tell us something about the past? Can you think of any ‘average’ items in your house that could tell us something about you, your family, or the world you live in?

### Election Ticket, Democratic Party, 1860

VMHC Object Number: 2010.1.56

The earliest elections were conducted by voice vote or with paper ballots put into ballot boxes. These paper ballots, called “party tickets,” listed names from just one party, and they were counted under the watchful eye of local party and election officials. This ticket from the presidential election of 1860 is for the candidates of the Southern Democratic Party. Due to debates over the future of slavery, the Democratic Party could not agree on a presidential candidate at its 1860 national convention. This led to two separate presidential nominees; Stephen Douglas represented more moderate northern Democrats and John Breckenridge represented



Newspaper announcement of South Carolina’s secession  
 (VMHC Broadside 1860:30)



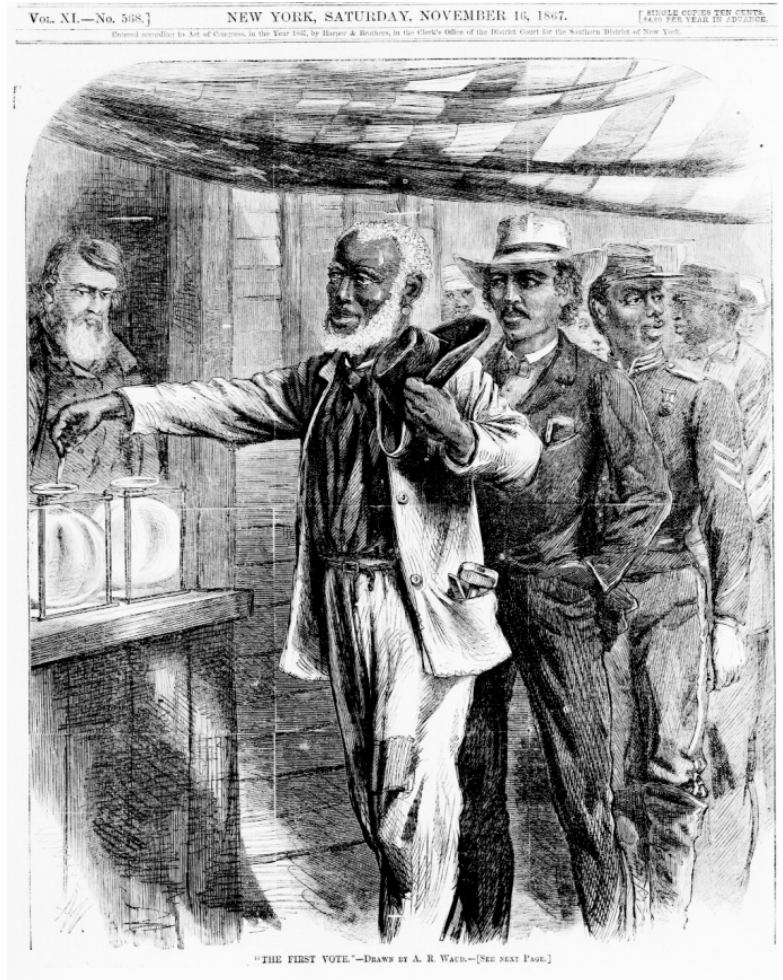
staunchly pro-slavery southern Democrats. The Republican Party's Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 election, leading to the immediate secession of South Carolina. Ten other states would follow South Carolina's example, forming the Confederate States of America and leading to the Civil War.

1. How does this ticket differ from modern ballots people use to vote today?
2. What do you think are some downsides of voting using a ticket that looks like this? Can you think of any benefits?
3. Can you list some of the principles that the candidates of this party stand for?
4. What is the meaning of the principle, "The People of the Territories in forming State Governments to adopt their own Institutions?"

**Certificate, *The Grand Army of Republicans* issued to James Jones, 1878**

VMHC Object Number: 2010.0074

Formed on an anti-slavery platform in 1854, the Republican Party was instrumental in the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments, ending slavery, granting African Americans citizenship, and giving Black men the right to vote, respectively. Following the end of the Civil War, formerly enslaved people eagerly entered politics to defend their hard-earned rights and fight for equality. Most Black people supported the Republican Party, including Prince Edward County farmer James Jones, who was active in recruiting voters in his community. Between 1867 and 1895, this political activism resulted in nearly 100 Black Virginians serving in the two houses of the General Assembly or in the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868.



"The First Vote," engraving published in *Harper's Weekly*, Nov. 16, 1867, courtesy of the Library of Virginia

1. What election is James Jones organizing voters to participate in?
2. What part of Virginia is James Jones working to recruit voters in?
3. Examine the slogan on the left-hand side of the certificate: "The Union: It Must and Shall Be Preserved." What do you think this slogan is referring to?
4. Can you identify some of the challenges Black men might face when voting that are mentioned on the certificate? Are there any other challenges you can think of?

## Speech, John Randolph Tucker, 1882

VMHC Call Number: JV6870 .T79

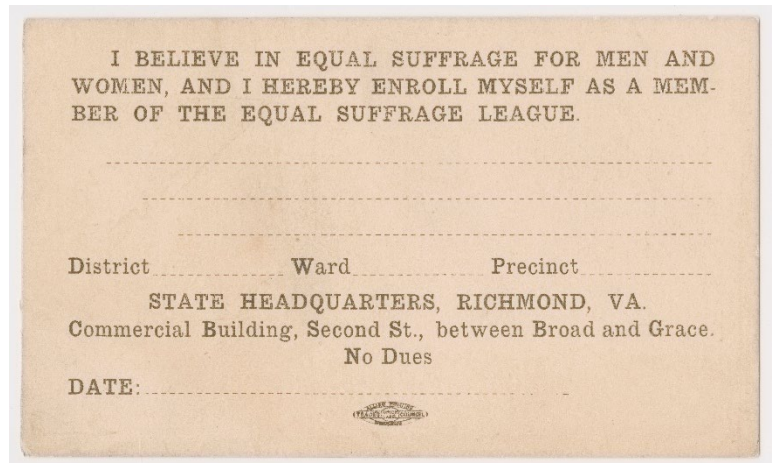
While the Civil War led to expanded access to citizenship for Black Americans, in the decades after, the U.S. restricted access to people of Asian descent. This prejudice culminated in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which banned immigrants from China for a 10-year period that was eventually extended indefinitely. Pushed by western states that feared the labor competition posed by Chinese immigrants, some Virginia politicians supported the act on grounds of racial superiority. In this speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, Virginia Congressman John Randolph Tucker spoke in support of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

1. What are some of the main reasons Tucker provides for his opposition to Chinese immigration?
2. How does Tucker define civilization? Why might his definition be subjective?
3. Think of some examples of modern-day debates over immigration. What are the similarities and differences between Tucker's arguments in favor of the Chinese Exclusion Act?

## Broadside, Results of Equal Suffrage, 1916

VMHC Call Number: Broadside 1916.5

Since the mid-1800s, women demanded the right to vote. Prior to the twentieth century, Virginia did not have a dedicated woman's suffrage club. This ended in 1909, when Lila Meade Valentine established the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia (ESL). By 1916, the club had grown to almost 16,000 members and held large rallies in Richmond and other cities across the state. Despite their efforts, the ESL failed to convince state representatives of the importance of female suffrage and would not gain voting rights until passage of the 19th amendment to the Constitution in 1920. The ESL distributed this broadside to demonstrate the benefits other states had seen when they allowed women to vote.



Equal Suffrage League Membership Card  
(VMHC 2000.54.2)

1. Who do you think is the main audience for this broadside, men or women? Why?
2. What other major national social issue is mentioned in this broadside?
3. Why do you think the percentage of men who vote goes up when women have the right to vote?
4. Can you think of any other differences between states that might have been a result of not allowing women to vote?

## Pamphlet, Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics, 1924

VMHC Call Number: HQ750.U6 V5 1925

In the early 1900s, the pseudoscience of eugenics falsely claimed measurable differences between races. Supporters believed undesirable physical and moral characteristics could be eliminated by controlling marriage and reproduction. Virginia's state registrar of vital statistics, Walter A. Plecker, strongly believed in eugenics and used his office's authority over birth, death, and marriage certificates to label people as either "colored" or "non-colored" based solely on the person's family history. These policies aligned with the growing popularity of organizations that promoted white Christian superiority, like the Ku Klux Klan. In this pamphlet, Plecker describes his belief in eugenics and provides a copy of the 1924 Racial Integrity Act, which he helped pass, that placed restrictions on Virginians' ability to identify themselves and prohibited inter-racial marriage. Virginia's ban on inter-racial marriage remained in place until the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court ruling ended such bans nationwide.

1. What was the punishment for making a false statement on a racial registration certificate?
2. Why might people not be able to accurately fill out a racial registration certificate?
3. Can you think of any other examples of debates over the right to marriage?
4. During the 1930s, Germany looked to the United States as inspiration for passing its own laws persecuting Jewish people. What similarities do you see between Virginia's Racial Integrity Act and Nazi-era laws?

## Civil Rights Stamp, 1940s

VMHC Object Number: 2002.148.5

As the United States prepared to enter World War II, African Americans called out the hypocrisy of America's global support for democracy, while at the same time denying equal protections for its own citizens. In response, Black activists, led by A. Philip Randolph, began organizing a mass march on Washington D.C. for the summer of 1941. These efforts became known as the March on Washington Movement (MOWM). To head off this protest, President Roosevelt issued an executive order establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC). This committee was designed to investigate and act against discriminatory hiring and labor practices in any industry that received government contracts. After the war, government officials debated the continued need for the FEPC, and while several attempts were made to make the agency permanent, they all failed.



KKK Hood  
(VMHC 2005.44)



NAACP Wartime Poster, 1944,  
courtesy of the Library of Congress

This stamp promotes the MOWM and uses an image of a Black sailor to stress the importance of African Americans to the U.S. war effort.

1. What are the two main demands of the March on Washington Movement's slogan that can be seen on this stamp? Do you see any similarities between their slogan and those of other civil rights movements?
2. Can you think of any other wars in U.S. history where protestors called out the hypocritical actions or words of the American government?
3. During World War II, why would African Americans join the military or work in defense industry jobs when they were treated like second class citizens?

### Report, Virginia Voters League, 1944

VMHC Call Number: JK1929.V8 V8

In 1902, Virginia adopted a new state constitution that enacted sweeping restrictions on the right to vote, specifically targeting African Americans. Among the provisions included were poll taxes, an understanding clause, and literacy tests. These measures led to a drastic reduction in the number of Black voters; in 1944, 89% of eligible Black voters did not meet the requirements to vote. Formed in 1941 and led by civil rights advocate Luther P. Jackson, the Virginia Voters League worked with the NAACP to increase African American voting rates. This booklet provides statistics on voter participation and advice on how best to improve voter turnout.

1. The Virginia Voters League's slogan is "Pay the poll tax in order to abolish the poll tax." What do you think this means?
2. Why would poll taxes prevent people from voting?
3. Can you think of any laws that exist today that might prevent people from voting?

### Political Buttons, 1930s – 1990s

VMHC Object Numbers: 1995.5.84, 1995.5.260, 1995.5.15, 1995.5.56, 1995.5.5, 1998.88.17

Every election year, thousands of buttons, stickers, signs, and other forms of campaign advertisement are worn or displayed by voters to show their support for a candidate or cause. These materials build a sense of community among like-minded individuals and encourage them to turn out on Election Day. One of the most popular and well-known campaign items are buttons. First used in Abraham Lincoln's 1860 presidential campaign, political buttons began to be mass produced and used widely by the late 1800s. These buttons from our collection represent several different 20<sup>th</sup> century campaigns.



Commemorative clothing button made to celebrate the first inauguration of George Washington, 1789 (VMHC 2019.36.1)

1. Look at these buttons as a group – what are some of the different approaches to advertising you see?
2. Can you take away any information about the candidates’ or their opponents’ ideas from the buttons?
3. Choose one button that you think is most successful or least successful - why?

### Newsletter, Gay Rights Association, 1970s

VMHC Call Number: Mss3 G2546 a

While LGBTQ+ people have been fighting for acceptance and belonging for centuries, the modern Gay Rights Movement is generally traced back to the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City. Following Stonewall, gay civic organizations formed throughout the U.S. to lobby government officials on behalf of their community. Richmond’s Gay Rights Association (GRA) was formed in 1977 by members of the gay community who were impatient for direct political action. In this newsletter, the GRA encourages supporters to attend a Richmond City Council meeting and advocate for the passing of a local anti-discrimination ordinance that would include language protecting sexual orientation.



Virginia Gay Lesbian Bisexual Community Center Flag  
(VMHC 2004.358)

1. What other groups of people does the newsletter identify as allies in support of this ordinance?
2. Why do you think the newsletter has to reassure readers that, “Your appearance at a City Council meeting ... will not single you out as being gay?”
3. Can you identify three tactics the newsletter thinks will be effective in sharing their message at the meeting?
4. Can you think of modern-day issues where LGBTQ+ people are still fighting for acceptance?

## Protest Sign, "Women's Rights are Human Rights," 2018

VMHC Object Number: 2018.72.8

The Women's March of 2017 was the largest single-day protest in U.S. history. Satellite marches in cities around the world, including Richmond, represented a groundswell of female activism. Largely seen as a response to the election of President Donald Trump, this group showed their support for a variety of progressive issues. In January 2018, on the first anniversary of these protests, another round of marches took place. The 2018 events reflected continued opposition to the Trump administration and support for the growing #MeToo feminist movement, which continues to highlight sexual harassment and gender discrimination in society. This sign was used during the 2018 protest that took place in Richmond, Virginia.



"Pussy hat" from Women's March  
RVA/Pride, 2019  
(VMHC 2019.30.4)

1. What do you notice about the sign's design?
2. How do the sign's features connect with the message of the Women's March?
3. What other items could you bring to a protest to signal your support of an idea?

**American Democracy**

Petition, Virginia House of Burgesses, 1772

VMHC Call Number: Mss4 V81934 a 4

To His King's most Excellent Majesty.

The humble Address of the House of Burgesses  
OF Virginia.

Most Gracious Sovereign.

We your Majesty's dutiful and loyal Subjects the Burgesses of Virginia, now met in General Assembly, beg Leave with all Humility, to approach your Royal Presence.

The many Instances of your Majesty's benevolent Intentions and most generous Disposition to promote the Prosperity and Happiness of your Subjects in the Colonies encourage us to look up to the Throne, and implore your Majesty's paternal Assistance in averting a Calamity of a most alarming Nature.

The Importation of Slaves into the Colonies from the Coast of Africa hath long been considered as a Trade of great Inhumanity, and, under its present Encouragement, we have too much reason to fear will endanger the very Existence of your Majesty's American Dominions.

We are sensible that some of your Majesty's Subjects in Great Britain may reap Emoluments from this sort of Traffick, but when we consider that it greatly retards the Settlement of the Colonies with more useful Inhabitants, and may, in Time, have the most destructive Influence, we presume to hope that the Interest of a few will be disregarded, when placed in Competition with the Unity and Happiness of such Numbers of your Majesty's dutiful and loyal Subjects.

Deeply impressed with these Sentiments, we most humbly beseech your Majesty to remove all those Restraints on your Majesty's Governors of this Colony which inhibit their assisting to such Laws, as might have so very pernicious a Consequence. Your Majesty's ancient Colony and Dominion of Virginia hath at all Times and upon every Occasion been entirely devoted to your Majesty's sacred Person and Government, and we cannot forego this Opportunity of renewing those Assurances of the truest Loyalty and warmest Affection, which we have so often, with the greatest Integrity, given to the best of Kings, whose Wisdom and Goodness we esteem the surest Pleagues of the Happiness of all this People.

Peyton Randolph Speaker

To the King's most Excellent Majesty.

This humble Address of the House of Burgesses  
of Virginia.

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We your Majesty's dutiful and loyal Subjects the Burgesses of  
Virginia, now met in General Assembly, beg Leave with all Humility to  
approach your Royal Presence.

The many Instances of your Majesty's benevolent Intentions and  
most gracious Disposition to promote the Prosperity and Happiness of your  
Subjects in the Colonies encourage us to look up to the Throne, and implore  
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**American Democracy**

Petition, Virginia House of Burgesses, 1772

VMHC Call Number: Mss4 V81934 a 4

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his People.

Peyton Randolph Speaker

## American Democracy

Letter, George Washington to Bryan Fairfax, 20 July 1774

VMHC Call Number: Mss2 W277 c 3

(pg.3)

Majesty in as humble, & dutiful a manner as Subjects could do; nay more, we applied to the House of Lords, & House of Commons, in their different Legislative Capacities setting forth that, as Englishmen, we could not be deprived of this essential & valuable part of our Constitution; If then (as the Fact really is) it is against the Right of Taxation we now do, (as I before said) all along have contended, why should they suppose an exertion of this power would be less obnoxious now, than formerly? and what reasons have we to believe that they would make a second attempt whilst the same sentiments fill'd the Breast of every American, if they did not intend to enforce it if possible? The conduct of the Boston People could not justify the rigour of their Measures, unless their had been a Requisition of payment & refusal of it; nor did that measure require an Act to deprive the Govern<sup>mt</sup>. of Massachusetts Bay of their Charter, or to exempt Offenders from trial in the place, where Offences were committed, as there was not, nor could not be, a single Instance produced to manifest the receipt of it — Are not all these things self evident proofs of a fixed & uniform Plan to Tax us? If we want further proofs, does not all the Debates

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## American Democracy

Letter, George Washington to Bryan Fairfax, 20 July 1774

VMHC Call Number: Mss2 W277 c 3

(pg. 5)

by the Law of Nature & our Constitution we are, in my opinion, indubitably entitled to; I should even think it criminal to go further than this, under such an Idea; but none such I have, I think the Parliament of Great Britain hath no more Right to put their hands into my Pocket, without my consent, than I have to put my hands into yours, for money; and this being already urged to them in a firm, but decent manner by all the Colonies, what reason is there to expect any thing from their justice?—

As to the Resolution for addressing the Throne, I own to you Sir I think the whole might as well have been expung'd; I expect nothing from the measure; nor sh<sup>d</sup> my voice have accompanied it, if the non Importation Scheme was intended to be retarded by it; for I am convinc'd, as much as I am of my Existance, that there is no Relief for us but in their distress; & I think, at least I hope, that there is publick Virtue enough left among us to deny ourselves every thing but the bare necessaries of Life to accomplish this end—this we have a Right to do, & no power upon Earth can compel us to do otherwise, till they have first reduced us to the most abject state of Slavery that

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**American Democracy**

Letter, George Washington to Bryan Fairfax, 20 July 1774

VMHC Call Number: Mss2 W277 c 3

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(pg.6)

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our Exports would, no doubt, be a shorter Cut  
than the other, to effect this purpose; but if  
we owe Money to Great Britain, nothing but  
the last necessity can justify the Non-payment  
of it; and therefore, I have great doubts  
upon this head, & wish to see the other me-  
thod, which is legal, & will facilitate these  
payments, first tried. —

I cannot conclude, without expressing  
some concern, that I should differ so  
widely in Sentiments from you on a matter  
of such great Moment, & general Import;  
I should much distrust my own Judgment  
upon the occasion, if my Nature did not  
recoil at the thought of Submitting to Mea-  
sures which I think subversive of every  
thing that I ought to hold dear and valu-  
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that the voice of Mankind is with me. —  
I must apologize for sending you so  
rough a sketch of my thoughts upon your  
letter. — when I look'd back and saw the  
length of my own, I could not, as I am also  
a good deal hurried at this time, bear the  
thoughts of making of a fair copy. —

I am & Sir Yr. Most Obed. Humble Serv<sup>t</sup>  
G. Washington

TRANSCRIPT | Letter, George Washington to Bryan Fairfax, 20 July 1774 (pg. 6)

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I must appologize for sending you so rough a sketch of my thoughts upon your Letter. when I look'd back and saw the length of my own, I could not, as I am also a good deal hurried at this time, bear the thoughts of making off a fair Copy.

I am Dr Sir Yr Most Obedt Humble Servt

## **American Democracy**

Letter, George Washington to Bryan Fairfax, 20 July 1774

VMHC Call Number: Mss2 W277 c 3

Go: Washington

[\[For a transcription of the full letter, see the National Archives' Founders Online page, linked here.\]](#)



**American Democracy**

Emancipation Document, "Sarah," 1782

VMHC Call Number: Mss3 Su 788 a 5

I Richard Powell of Surry County in Virginia being fully persuaded that freedom is the Natural Right of all Mankind and that it is my duty to do unto others as I would desire to be done by in the like situation and having under my care one Negro whom I have heretofore held as a Slave by the Name of Sarah, aged fifty five Years: I hereby Emancipate and set free the said Slave and I do for myself my Heirs, Executors and Administrators relinquish all my Right, Title, Interest, and Claim or pretension of claim whatsoever either to her Person or to any Estate she may hereafter acquire. The above said Negro and all her future Inheritances to enjoy their full Freedom without any Interruption from me or any Person for, by, or under me. In Witness whereof I have herunto set my Hand and Seal this August Twentieth Year Anno Dom 1782

Rich<sup>d</sup> Powell. L.S.

At a Court held for Surry County August 27<sup>th</sup> 1782

The above Written Manumission was acknowledged by the within named Richard Powell and on his Motion Ordered to be Recorded.

Copy Teste J<sup>h</sup> Faulcon Cl<sup>k</sup>.

TRANSCRIPT | Emancipation Document, "Sarah," 1782

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Richd. Rowell LS

At a Court held for Surry County August 27<sup>th</sup> 1782.

The afore Written Manumission was acknowledged by the within named Richard Rowell and on he Motion Ordered to be Recorded.

A Copy Teste

JH Faulcon [?] [?]

**American Democracy**

Citizenship Certificate, James Scott, 1811

VMHC Call Number: Mss2 Sco842 a 1

Virginia, to wit; At a Court of Appeals held at the Capitol in Richmond, the  
twenty second day of March 1811.  
James Scott, merchant, an alien and a native of that part of Great Britain called  
Scotland, this day personally came into Court, and applied to be admitted to become  
citizen of the United States, and it appearing to the Court, on due proof made,  
that he was residing within the limits, and under the Jurisdiction, of the United  
States between the eighteenth day of June 1798, and the fourteenth day of April  
1802, and has continued to reside within the same, and also that he has resided  
within this State one year immediately preceding this day; and he having in  
open Court declared on oath, that he will support the constitution of the  
United States, and that he doth absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure  
all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign Prince, Potentate, State or  
Sovereignty whatever and particularly to George the Third King of the United  
Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland; and moreover it appearing to the  
satisfaction of the Court that during his residence in the said United States  
he has behaved as a man of good moral character, attached to the constitution  
of the United States, and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the  
same, he the said James Scott is thereupon admitted a citizen of the  
United States.

Attest, Teste, A. Dance. C. C.

Virginia, to wit,

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United States

A copy, teste, H. Dance L. L.

**American Democracy**

Sugar bowl promoting William Henry Harrison, 1840

VMHC Object Number: 2019.36.18



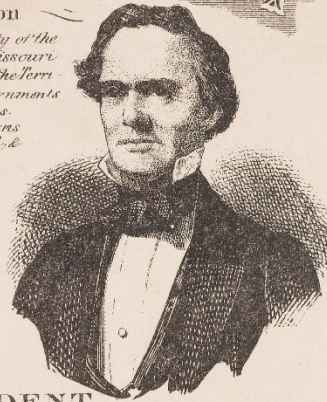

**American Democracy**

Election Ticket, Democratic Party, 1860

VMHC Object Number: 2010.1.56

**DEMOCRATIC TICKET**

OUR PRINCIPLES  
The Constitution



*The Sovereignty & Equality of the States; The Repeal of the Missouri Restriction. The People of the Territories in forming State Governments to adopt their own Institutions. Equal protection to Citizens Native & Naturalized & to every species of Property.*

FOR PRESIDENT  
**JOHN C. BRECKINRIDGE**  
of Kentucky.  
FOR VICE PRESIDENT  
**JOSEPH LANE**  
of Oregon

ELECTORS

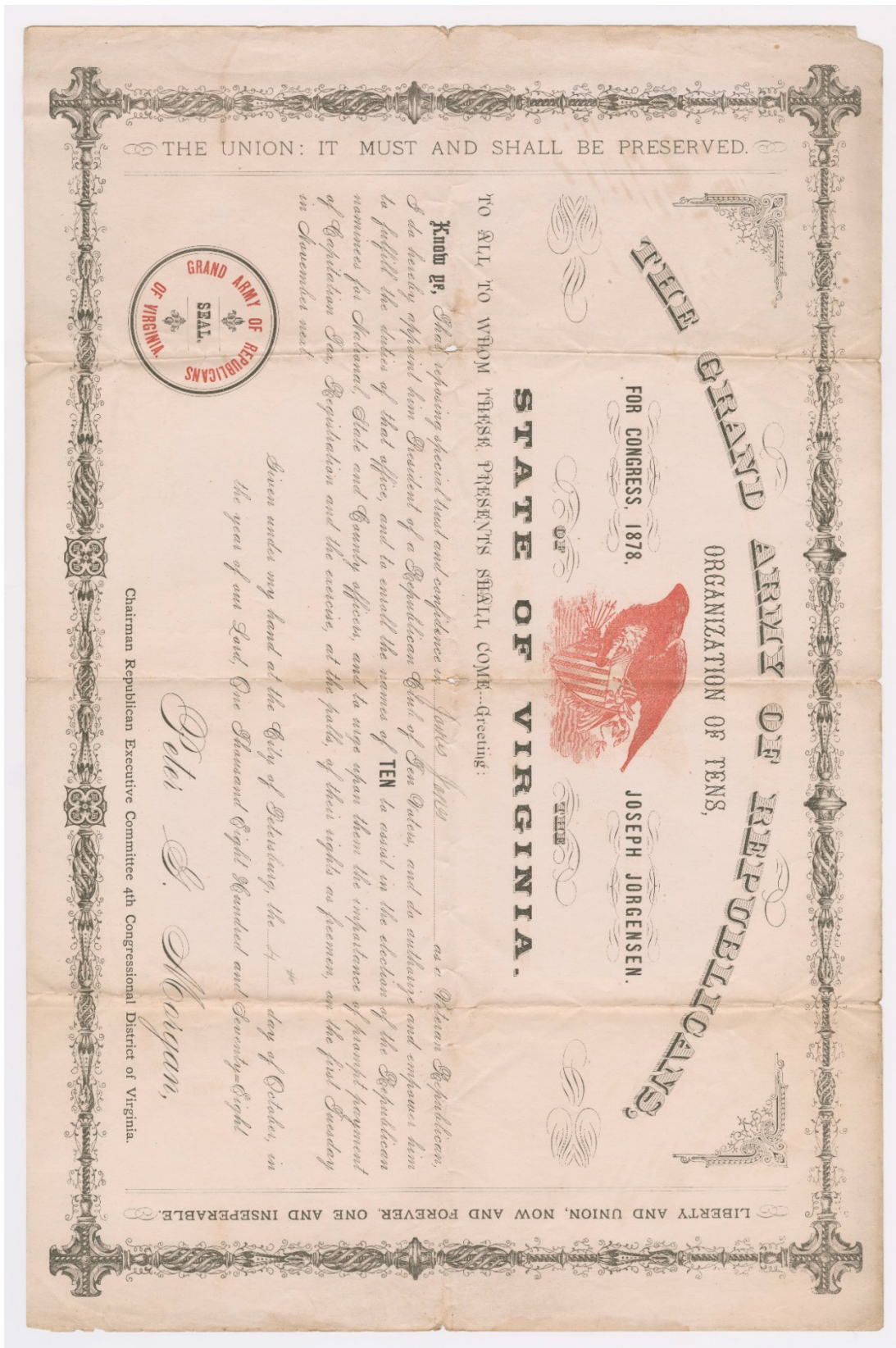
1st District — William Lamb, of Norfolk City  
2d do — Thomas F. Goode, of Mecklenburg  
3d do — John R. Edmunds, of Halifax  
4th do — Thomas T. Tredway, of Prince Edward  
5th do — James L. Kemper, of Madison  
6th do — James Lyons, of Henrico  
7th do — Rich'd A. Claybrook, of Northumberland  
8th do — Beverley B. Douglas, of King William  
9th do — Eppa Hunton, of Prince William  
10th do — Thomas M. Isbell, of Jefferson  
11th do — James W. Massie, of Rockbridge  
12th do — Wm. H. Anthony, of Botetourt  
13th do — Isaac B. Durn, of Washington  
14th do — John G. Newman, of Kanawha  
15th do — Zedekiah Kidwell, of Marion

*Write your name on the back of this Ticket.  
Election on Tuesday November 6<sup>th</sup> 1860  
List of Hoyer & Ludwig Richmond Va*

**American Democracy**

Certificate, The Grand Army of Republicans issued to James Jones, 1878

VMHC Object Number: 2010.0074



## American Democracy

Speech, John Randolph Tucker, 1882

VMHC Call Number: JV6870 .T79

article of the treaty. Hardship to a Chinaman to deny him a privilege he has never enjoyed and to which he is not entitled as a right!

But gentlemen say the meaning is that our legislation must be reasonable as to the prevention of the coming of the Chinese. Very well; but it must be reasonable not only with reference to his privilege of coming but in reference to the threat of danger to our people from his coming; and as the power is left to the Government of the United States to determine upon the reasonableness of the suspension, looking to the interests of our own country, we cannot admit an alien country to come into our counsels and decide that question for us.

Is, then, a suspension for twenty years reasonable?

Gentlemen on the other side who say that suspension for twenty years is unreasonable admit, as I understand, that they will vote for a suspension for ten years. Why is a suspension for ten years reasonable and a suspension for twenty years unreasonable? Reasonable with respect to what? I say with respect to the cessation of the danger which threatens our interests and which leads us to suspend the immigration. What is the danger? The danger is (and I will come to that directly) that the immigration of the Chinese throws upon the Pacific coast so large an alien population antagonistic in its civilization to our own as endangers the peace and order of that part of the country, impedes its growth and prosperity, and obstructs its civilization.

Now, when that danger ceases it is unreasonable to continue the suspension. So long as it continues it is reasonable, in the sight of God and in the judgment of all true men, to continue it. As between the safety of our own people and the privilege of the Chinese to come here to labor and send his money saved from his wages back to his home in China, who in this House will hesitate to say that it is our right and duty under the treaty to take care that the rights of American citizens and the welfare of American States must first be conserved before we can consider the privileges and interests of the Chinaman? [Applause.]

As between the right of the citizen to peace and security and social progress, and the privilege of an alien to enter our country, can there be a doubt of the duty of our Government, which reserved and to which China conceded the authority to decide between these conflicting claims, to defend and preserve the interests of our own people, even if thereby it denies the privileges claimed by the foreigner? By the true construction of the treaty, right cannot yield to privilege, and the citizen must be preferred to the alien.

Now, if I am right in saying that this bill does not violate the treaty stipulations, and if the bill did violate them that no treaty stipulation in reference to this regulation of commerce binds us at all against our will, let us advance to the inquiry what our constitutional powers and duties are in this matter. The Constitution of the United States gives to Congress the power to regulate commerce with foreign nations; and by a series of decisions the Supreme Court has held that this extends not only to trade and to all the instruments of commerce and to navigation, but to intercourse, which includes the migration of persons, as well as to the interchange of products. (Passenger cases, 7 Howard; *Henderson vs. Mayor of New York*, 2 Otto, 259.)



where they cannot flow together in the relations of social life, in marriage, in the family, and in the home. Civil and political relations are difficult of adjustment when social and individual affinities are impossible and social and personal incompatibilities exist.

What is civilization? It consists in the ideas; the moral and religious instincts, innate and acquired; and in the advanced and quickened intellectual and moral forces, of a people, from which, as the soil, air, light, and moisture spring and grow the bud, the flower, and fruit of the human race; in art and science and philosophy; in social institutions, in the family, the home, and the customs of social life, giving law to the relations of human beings to each other; in moral and religious principles; in the relations of the state to the individual, and in all those forms of material development by which the brain of man subjects physical forces to his will, attaches them to the car of his progress, and achieves the triumphs which we witness among the nations of Christendom in this splendid century of human history.

What are the fundamental ideas of our Christian civilization?

First. Monotheism—the worship of the one only living and invisible God.

Second. Marriage between one man and one woman in the holy union which makes a pure and happy household for the nurture and training of children, in the home of the Caucasian race. This is the true foundation of every well-ordered state. Conserve this, and the state will be noble and prosperous; destroy it, and all is lost.

Third. Parental nurture as the highest duty and noblest privilege on the one side, and on the other filial obedience and honor to the parent; the law of the home by which the child is educated for the position he is to hold as a law-loving and law-supporting citizen of a free country.

Fourth. The liberty of the citizen secured against the despotic and absolute domination of the government, which is bound to obedience to the will of the people, expressed in its fundamental law, the constitution of the state, creating and prescribing the authority of the government, and securing the rights of the individual man.

Contrast this with the civilization of the Chinaman. We are monotheists; he is a polytheistic pagan and idolater.

We are monogamists. The Chinaman is a polygamist! [Laughter.] God save the mark! Polygamists, buying and selling wives and admitting concubines to the home of the isolated and secluded wife! And gentlemen who lately were so earnest in extirpating polygamy from the society of American citizens are indignantly insisting on importing it from China in order to the pollution of the home life of our people on the Pacific coast. [Applause and laughter.]

What is the family relation? The Chinaman is not only a polygamist in such forms that this presence does not allow me to speak of it further, but he owns the child and may sell him into slavery.

What is the relation of the Chinaman (I cannot call him citizen) to the government? The emperor is the high priest of a theocracy, the vicegerent of God, and an autocrat, with absolute and unlimited power over the whole mass of Chinese people, his base and willing slaves. How can you transform such a slave into a citizen of free America?

The SPEAKER *pro tempore*, (Mr. PACHECO.) The time of the gentleman from Virginia has expired.

Mr. ROBESON. I ask that the gentleman's time be extended. There was no objection.

## RESULTS OF EQUAL SUFFRAGE.

Many ask the question, "What has been the gain in the states where women vote? Is it worth while?" they say, "Will Virginia have any better government when women vote?" The answer to these questions must come from the states where woman suffrage has been tested out. Let's compare the welfare laws of equal suffrage states with those of Virginia.

### EDUCATION LAWS.

In all equal suffrage states, a compulsory education law puts every child under fourteen years of age in school. Illiteracy has its lowest percentage in these states. Washington State, where woman suffrage obtains, leads the nation educationally.

In all equal suffrage states girls have equal educational facilities with boys, from the kindergarten to the state university.

In all equal suffrage states women are eligible to highest positions in public school system. Not so in Virginia.

In Virginia the state-wide compulsory education law is totally inadequate, reaching children only under twelve years of age, and for only sixteen weeks in each session, with many exemptions. In Virginia the percentage of illiteracy is large among adults and children. In Virginia girls have not equal educational facilities with boys, as they are not admitted to the state university, the cap-stone of our public school system. In Virginia women public school teachers have not equal pay for equal work, as in the suffrage states.

### PROTECTION FOR MOTHERS.

In all the equal suffrage states, mothers are protected by mothers' pension laws, so as to remain with their children, if deprived of the support of the father.

Mothers are also equal guardians of their children before the law in all but four suffrage states, sharing equally in the earnings of minor children, in the estates of deceased children, in the care and financial control in case of death or separation from the father.

In Virginia, the mother's pension law is optional with each county, and no county has put this law into effect, and the equal guardianship law does not include the guardianship of the estate of the child after the father's death. There are twenty-three non-suffrage states without equal guardianship laws.

### PROTECTION FOR THE WAGE-EARNING WOMAN.

All the suffrage states have an eight or nine-hour day for women. In Virginia, women may be worked ten hours.

The minimum wage law is also operating in a much larger proportion of suffrage states than in non-suffrage states. There is no such law in Virginia.

### SOCIAL PURITY LAWS.

In most of the suffrage states the age of consent is eighteen. In Virginia, it is fifteen. In the suffrage states, fathers of illegitimate children are compelled to contribute to their support. In Virginia there is no such law.

### PROHIBITION.

There are only two full suffrage states where prohibition of the liquor traffic has not been accomplished by state action—California and New York. There are fourteen non-suffrage states where the state laws sanction the liquor traffic.

### AN INTERESTED CITIZENSHIP.

In all the suffrage states, the percentage of interested voting citizens has been largely increased by giving the ballot to women. Men vote in larger numbers than before, and women vote with more interest than men do in non-suffrage states.

The duties of citizenship are discussed and practiced with more interest where men and women vote together. Their blended view points bring results in better citizenship expressed in progressive welfare legislation.

In Virginia, there are 363,659 men of voting age, and only about 80,000 men generally vote and decide all elections.

When Virginia women get the ballot, our state will then have a larger and more interested electorate, and take its place in front rank in all that pertains to better government.

**Equal Suffrage League of Virginia**

100 North Fourth Street

RICHMOND, VA.



## **AN ACT TO PRESERVE RACIAL INTEGRITY**

1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia, That the State Registrar of Vital Statistics may as soon as practicable after the taking effect of this act, prepare a form whereon the racial composition of any individual, as Caucasian, negro, Mongolian, American Indian, Asiatic Indian, Malay, or any mixture thereof, or any other non-Caucasic strains, and if there be any mixture, then the racial composition of the parents and other ancestors, in so far as ascertainable, so as to show in what generation such mixture occurred, may be certified by such individual, which form shall be known as a registration certificate. The State Registrar may supply to each local registrar a sufficient number of such forms for the purposes of this act; each local registrar may personally or by deputy, as soon as possible after receiving said forms, have made thereon in duplicate a certificate of the racial composition as aforesaid, of each person resident in his district, who so desires, born before June fourteenth, nineteen hundred and twelve, which certificate shall be made over the signature of said person, or in the case of children under fourteen years of age, over the signature of a parent, guardian, or other person

standing in *loco parentis*. One of said certificates for each person thus registering in every district shall be forwarded to the State Registrar for his files; the other shall be kept on file by the local registrar.

Every local registrar may, as soon as practicable, have such registration certificate made by or for each person in his district who so desires, born before June fourteen, nineteen hundred and twelve, for whom he has not on file a registration certificate, or a birth certificate.

2. It shall be a felony for any person wilfully or knowingly to make a registration certificate false as to color or race. The wilful making of a false registration or birth certificate shall be punished by confinement in the penitentiary for one year.

3. For each registration certificate properly made and returned to the State Registrar, the local registrar returning the same shall be entitled to a fee of twenty-five cents, to be paid by the registrant. Application for registration and for transcript may be made direct to the State Registrar, who may retain the fee for expenses of his office.

4. No marriage license shall be granted until the clerk or deputy clerk has reasonable assurance that the statements as to color of both man and woman are correct.

If there is reasonable cause to disbelieve that applicants are of pure white race, when that fact is stated, the clerk or deputy clerk

shall withhold the granting of the license until satisfactory proof is produced that both applicants are "white persons" as provided for in this act.

The clerk or deputy clerk shall use the same care to assure himself that both applicants are colored, when that fact is claimed.

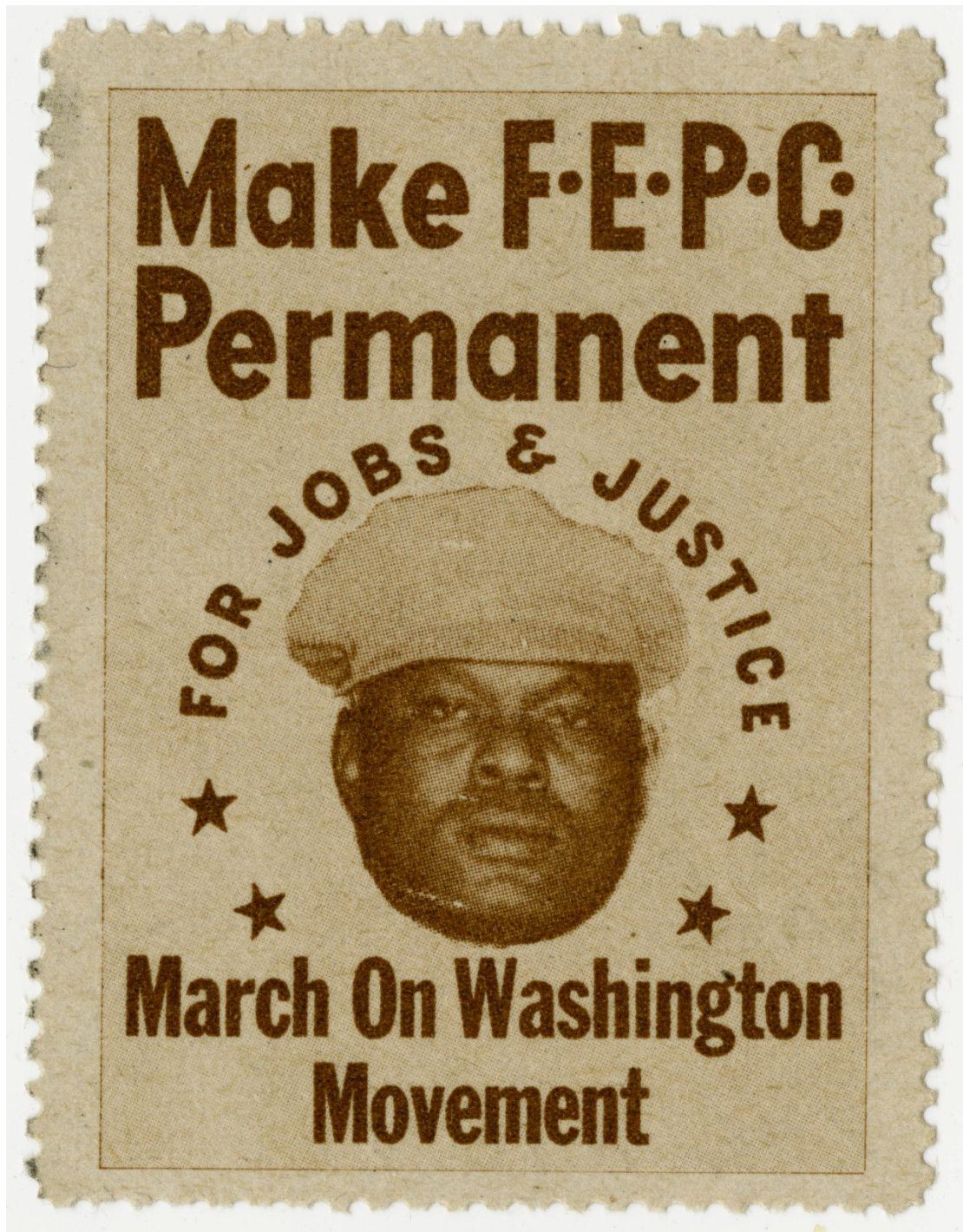
5. It shall hereafter be unlawful for any white person in this State to marry any save a white person, or a person with no other admixture of blood than white and American Indian. For the purpose of this act, the term "white person" shall apply only to the person who has no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian; but persons who have one-sixteenth or less of the blood of the American Indian and have no other non-Caucasic blood shall be deemed to be white persons. All laws heretofore passed and now in effect regarding the intermarriage of white and colored persons shall apply to marriages prohibited by this act.

6. For carrying out the purposes of this act and to provide the necessary clerical assistance, postage and other expenses of the State Registrar of Vital Statistics, twenty per cent of the fees received by local registrars under this act shall be paid to the State Bureau of Vital Statistics, which may be expended by the said bureau for the purposes of this act.

**American Democracy**

Civil Rights Stamp, 1940s

VMHC Object Number: 2002.148.5



THE VOTING STATUS OF NEGROES

**FOREWORD**

This fifth annual report of the Virginia Voters League defines the voting status of Negroes in Virginia as of May 7, 1944, the last day for paying the poll tax in order to have voted in the ensuing August primary and the November election. In order to satisfy the demand for a statement of voting requirements in Virginia and other states this handbook devotes a section to this topic also.

To all persons who seek to advance the political status of Negroes and to observe racial trends on suffrage in Virginia this publication may serve as a guide.

The compiler of this report is again deeply indebted to the 124 county and city court clerks in Virginia for furnishing the data on poll tax paying either by letter or by sending the poll tax list itself. Every county and city is included in this report because every clerk cooperated.

**SLOGAN**

**Pay the poll tax in order to abolish the poll tax.**

IN VIRGINIA

**PART I.**

**THE POLL TAX**

**Number Paying in Full**

The number of Negroes in Virginia who met the three year poll tax requirement for voting in 1943 was 32,504; the number who met this requirement in 1944 was 41,579, an advance of 9,075. Advancement there was; yet among the entire 365,717 Negroes of voting age in Virginia, only 9 per cent were qualified for 1943, while 11.3 were qualified in 1944, a gain of 2.3 per cent. Expressed otherwise about 89 per cent of the Negroes were disqualified from voting in 1944 because they had not met the celebrated poll tax requirement laid down by the constitution of Virginia.

**Number Paying in Part**

The payment of the poll tax by all Virginians is irregular. The law requires that the levy be paid for the three years preceding the year of election, but many citizens pay for only one or two of these years and therefore find themselves unable to vote. The number of Negroes who pay for only one or two years is actually greater than the number who pay for three years. In Bedford County, for example, 914 persons paid the tax for either 1944, but only 41,579 of this number paid for cent, paid for all three years. Worse still, in Brunswick County, 1,489 persons paid for either 1941, 1942, or 1943; but only 541, or 36 per cent, paid for all three years. In the whole state there were perhaps 100,000 who paid all or a part of the tax in order to vote in 1944, but only 41,385 of this number paid for each of the years required.

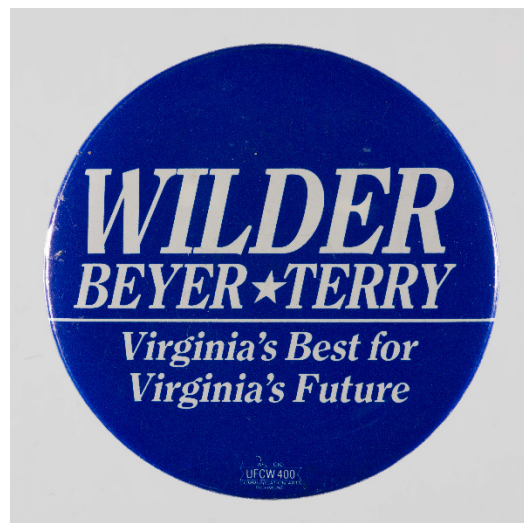
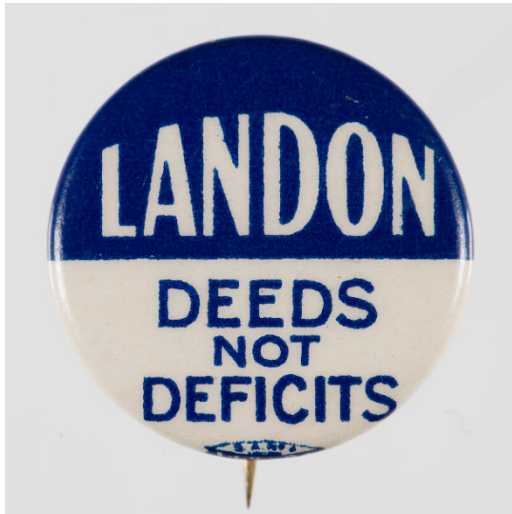
**Number Paying Unknowingly**

Since county and city treasurers combine the poll tax assessment and the real estate and personal property assessment in one bill, many citizens pay the poll tax as one item in the whole bill without knowing they have thereby satisfied the chief requirement for

**American Democracy**

Political Buttons, 1930s – 1990s

VMHC Object Numbers: 1995.5.84, 1995.5.260, 1995.5.15, 1995.5.56, 1995.5.5, 1998.88.17



# GRA Newsletter

Published by the Gay Rights Association  
as a journal of cooperation and liberation

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## EXTRA

Monday, March 12, Richmond City Council will hold a public hearing and probably vote on the most important law protecting the gay community ever introduced anywhere in Virginia:

### THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORDINANCE.

We are sharing in an historic moment. This is the first time that sexual orientation has been included in an anti-discrimination statute in Virginia. If passed, the ordinance will be a powerful symbolic statement which will be widely noted.

Your support of the Ordinance is crucial. Please attend the Council meeting with at least two friends. We urge you to arrive early--at 6:00 or 6:15--to be sure to get a seat before the possible busloads of fundamentalist opponents arrive. We will not sit in a bloc, but will try to fill the auditorium, which seats 400. It would be beneficial to our cause if women would wear business attire and men would wear coats and ties. But whatever you wear, be there!

Entrance to the 2nd floor Council Chamber is by the escalator on the Marshall Street side of City Hall. City Hall is on Broad Street between Ninth and Tenth Streets. The meeting will begin at 7:00 and the issue should be decided by 8:30 or 9:00.

We beg you to attend, to show Council by your presence that you join with blacks, women, the elderly, the handicapped, in supporting this Rights Ordinance. There will be an opportunity for supporters to speak, but no supporters are singled out or put on the spot in any way. Your simple, quiet presence in support of the Ordinance does influence Council.

Your appearance at a City Council meeting in support of this comprehensive Rights Ordinance will not single you out as being gay. This is not a gay protest demonstration, but a non-emotional meeting of a public governing body. If you are afraid to attend, you have just proved how necessary this Ordinance is.

Please make the effort to be at City Hall early on Monday night, March 12. YOU ARE IMPORTANT! PLEASE COME AND BRING OTHERS!



THIS BUTTON can be worn by all supporters of Human Rights in Richmond--white and black, women and men, old and young, gay and straight.



**American Democracy**

Protest Sign, "Women's Rights are Human Rights," 2018

VMHC Object Number: 2018.72.8

