FEMALE ACTIVISM IN VIRGINIA

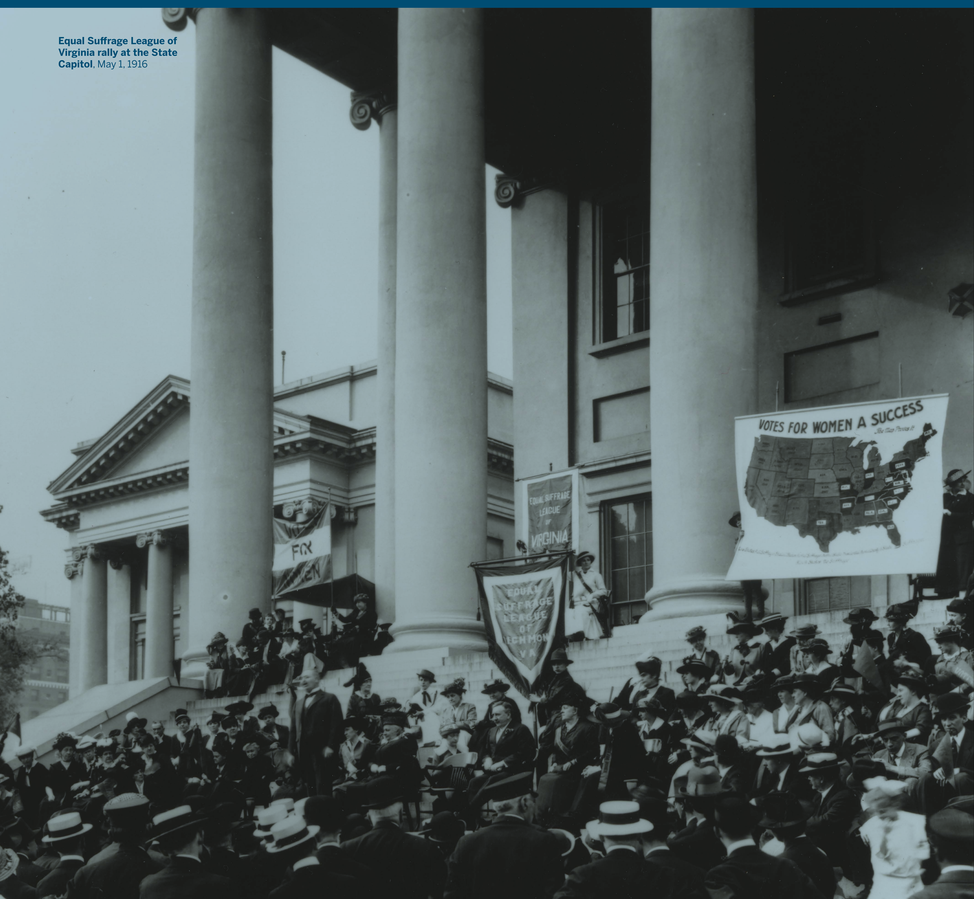
Agents of Change

FROM WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE TO TODAY

In 1920, the United States ratified the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote. This milestone event was the culmination of a 70-year-long struggle for female suffrage, and it ushered in a new age of women's civic activism. With the vote, women gained greater power to effect change in American society.

Over the ensuing century, women expanded their fight for equality beyond the ballot box to other arenas, including educational institutions, professional opportunities, and social justice issues. And the battle against persistent sexism and gender-based disparities continues today.

Agents of Change explores the legacy of women's suffrage in Virginia since 1920 through a diverse selection of female changemakers—women who worked to change their communities, the Commonwealth, and the country. Their stories underscore the importance of civic engagement in a democracy, as well as the power of individuals to create a better world.



Equal Suffrage League of Virginia rally at the State Capitol, May 1, 1916

Agents of Change

FEMALE ACTIVISM IN VIRGINIA • FROM WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE TO TODAY •

This exhibition is organized by the Virginia Museum of History & Culture and is a signature project of the

Commonwealth of Virginia's Women's Suffrage Centennial Commemoration

Agents of Change is also made possible by
The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation
Mr. and Mrs. G. Gilmer Minor III

VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF HISTORY & CULTURE

Founded in 1831 as the Virginia Historical Society, the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC)—a privately funded nonprofit—is the oldest cultural organization in the Commonwealth of Virginia and one of the oldest and most distinguished history organizations in the nation.

Located in the Museum District of Richmond, the VMHC houses a collection of nearly 9 million items and serves as the state history museum with permanent and special exhibitions as well as a vibrant portfolio of public programs. Visit us at **VirginiaHistory.org**

Unless otherwise indicated, all images in this exhibition are from the collection of the Virginia Historical Society, which owns and operates the Virginia Museum of History & Culture.

The Virginia Women's Suffrage Centennial Commemoration is the Commonwealth's official celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment.

A task force consisting of four bipartisan legislators from the General Assembly and five civilian members—all appointed by the governor—oversees the Commemoration, with the VMHC serving as the lead institutional organizer in partnership with the Library of Virginia.

The Commemoration encompasses a series of activities across the state exploring the legacy of women's suffrage in Virginia. For more information on Commemoration events, visit **VirginiaHistory.org/2020**

100 WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE VIRGINIA CENTENNIAL

Marchers at the Women's March, Washington, D.C. January 21, 2017
Shelby Lum / Richmond Times-Dispatch

Winning & Wielding the Vote

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

—Nineteenth Amendment (1920)

Adèle Clark

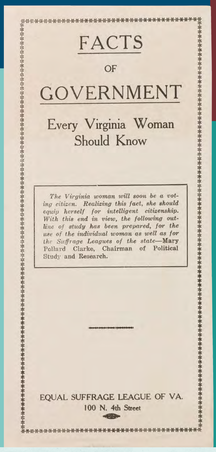
Adèle Clark (1882–1983) worked tirelessly first to enfranchise women and then to engage them in politics. In 1909, this Richmonder helped establish the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia (ESL), the largest pro-suffrage organization in the South. As a leading member of the ESL, Clark campaigned across the Commonwealth for voting equality for women.

With suffrage secured in 1920, Clark became president of Virginia's League of Women Voters, which mobilized women's new political voice to influence legislators.

Pro- and anti-suffrage postcards, about 1915

Many Virginians—male and female—opposed giving women the vote. The anti-suffrage postcard (right) suggests that the politically active woman will disenfranchise and emasculate her husband, leaving him to tend to domestic tasks.

In 1919, Virginia's legislature voted against ratifying the Nineteenth Amendment, but later—in 1952—passed it in a symbolic gesture.


FACTS
OF
GOVERNMENT
Every Virginia Woman Should Know

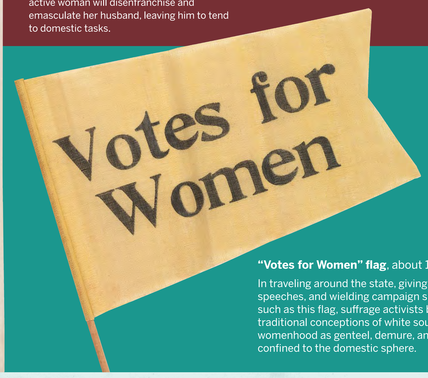
The Virginia woman will soon be a voting citizen. Realizing this fact, she should equip herself for intelligent citizenship. With this end in view, the following outline of study has been prepared, for the use of the individual woman as well as for the Suffrage Leagues of the state.—Mary Pollard Clarke, Chairman of Political Study and Research.

EQUAL SUFFRAGE LEAGUE OF VA.
100 N. 4th Street

Facts of Government Every Virginia Woman Should Know, about 1920
Equal Suffrage League of Virginia

As the prospect of gaining the vote grew stronger, Clark and other ESL members turned to preparing women "for intelligent citizenship." They held civics classes and published study guides such as this one. Virginia's League of Women Voters continued this educational work after the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified.

VMHC, Gift of Mrs. George F. White



"Votes for Women" flag, about 1912

In traveling around the state, giving speeches, and wielding campaign signs such as this flag, suffrage activists bucked traditional conceptions of white southern womenhood as genteel, demure, and confined to the domestic sphere.

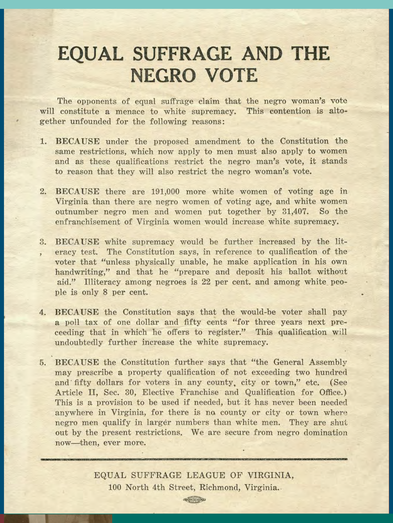
(top portrait)
Adèle Clark
Special Collections and Archives, VCU Libraries

Equal Suffrage League of Virginia at the Virginia State Capitol (Adèle Clark at far left), February 1915

More Suffrage Stories

Suffrage & Race

Across the nation, racism marked the long fight for female suffrage. Many white suffragists resented that black men got the right to vote before them in 1870, and most suffrage organizations—including the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia (ESL)—refused to admit black members. Suffrage opponents claimed that giving women the ballot would enfranchise enough black female voters to create "negro domination."



EQUAL SUFFRAGE AND THE NEGRO VOTE

The opponents of equal suffrage claim that the negro woman's vote will constitute a menace to white supremacy. This contention is altogether unfounded for the following reasons:

1. BECAUSE under the proposed amendment to the Constitution the same restrictions, which now apply to men must also apply to women and as these qualifications restrict the negro man's vote, it stands to reason that they will also restrict the negro woman's vote.

2. BECAUSE there are 191,000 more white women of voting age in Virginia than there are negro women of voting age, and white women outnumber negro men and women put together by 31,407. So the enfranchisement of Virginia women would increase white supremacy.

3. BECAUSE white supremacy would be further increased by the literacy test. The Constitution says, in reference to qualification of the voter that "unless physically unable, he make application in his own handwriting," and that he "prepare and deposit his ballot without aid." Illiteracy among negroes is 22 per cent. and among white people is only 8 per cent.

4. BECAUSE the Constitution says that the would-be voter shall pay a poll tax of one dollar and fifty cents "for three years next preceding that in which he offers to register." This qualification will undoubtedly further increase the white supremacy.

5. BECAUSE the Constitution further says that "the General Assembly may prescribe a property qualification of not exceeding two hundred and fifty dollars for voters in any county, city or town," etc. (See Article II, Sec. 26, Elective Franchise and Qualification for Office.) This is a provision to be used if needed, but it has never been needed anywhere in Virginia, for there is no county or city or town where negro men qualify in larger numbers than white men. They are shut out by the present restrictions. We are secure from negro domination now—then, ever more.

EQUAL SUFFRAGE LEAGUE OF VIRGINIA,
100 North 4th Street, Richmond, Virginia.

Equal Suffrage and the Negro Vote, about 1916
Equal Suffrage League of Virginia

To counter racist fearmongering and win white support, the ESL issued this broadside asserting that Virginia's existing measures designed to limit the black vote—such as the poll tax—would maintain white supremacy.

Legislative Debutantes

Mrs. Sarah Lee Fain, left and Mrs. Helen Moore Henderson, first women to be elected to the Virginia General Assembly, pictured as they appeared.

First Women Elected To General Assembly Guests At Reception

Norfolk Pays Homage To Her Own Mrs. Fain And To Mrs. Henderson, of Southwest Virginia, On Eve of Their Departure For Richmond.

Political Firsts

With suffrage, Virginia women exercised their newfound political voice not only through voting, lobbying, and activism, but also through holding political office.

In 1924, **Sarah Lee Fain** (1888–1962) of Norfolk and **Helen Moore Timmons Henderson** (1877–1925) of Buchanan County became the first women elected to Virginia's General Assembly.

Virginian-Pilot **[Norfolk]**, January 9, 1924
Courtesy of the Library of Virginia

Jailed for Suffrage

In January 1917, members of the National Woman's Party began picketing the White House. These "Silent Sentinels" endured bad weather, harassment, and arrest.

A regular picketer, **Maud Jamison** (1890–1974) of Norfolk was arrested multiple times and imprisoned at the Occoquan Workhouse in Lorton, Virginia, where suffragists were subjected to poor conditions, beatings, and forced feedings.

Such barbarous treatment garnered public sympathy and, in 1918, President Woodrow Wilson declared his support for women's suffrage.

Detail of Maud Jamison from photograph of National Woman's Party suffrage picket line, 1917
Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, National Woman's Party Records, I.360

(top image) "**Votes for Women" pin**, about 1910

- **Women's suffrage protest at White House**, 1917
  Library of Congress

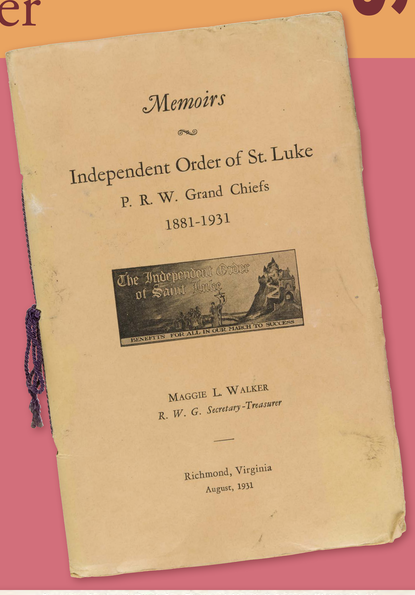
Empowering Black Americans

Maggie Lena Walker

Maggie Lena Walker (1864–1934) earned national renown as one of the most influential and accomplished black civic leaders in early 20th-century Richmond. A talented entrepreneur, she led a fraternal organization, established a newspaper and department store, and chartered a bank—making her the first black female bank president in America. These enterprises provided services, jobs, and economic opportunities to the black community when white-owned firms would not. Walker also fought for black female suffrage and for civil rights.

No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow.

—Maggie Walker



(above right) ***Memoirs: Independent Order of St. Luke***, 1931
Maggie L. Walker

From 1881 until her death, Walker was actively involved in the Independent Order of St. Luke (IOSL), a black fraternal organization that provided insurance and other benefits. She transformed the IOSL from a nearly bankrupt group to a financial powerhouse with 100,000 members in 24 states.

VMHC, Gift of Barbara R. Grey

(top portrait) **Maggie Lena Walker**, about 1910

Courtesy of National Park Service, Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site

(right) **Postcard of the St. Luke Bank and Trust Company**, about 1930
Maggie L. Walker

Walker founded the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank in 1903 and served as its president. "Let us put our moneys together," she stated, "and reap the benefit ourselves ... Let us have a bank that will take the nickels and turn them into dollars."

The bank, which went through several name changes and consolidations with other black-owned banks, remained in operation until the early 2000s.

Maggie Walker (first row center) and staff of the Independent Order of St. Luke, 1920s

Courtesy of National Park Service, Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site

Visionary Entrepreneur

Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver

The multi-talented Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver (1868–1940) of Marion dedicated her life to educational, economic, and spiritual uplift for communities in southwest Virginia.

In 1916, she established Rosemont Industries, a craft collective that produced household items—including hooked rugs, bed coverings, and furniture—based on traditional Appalachian designs. By using local artisans and raw materials (such as sheep's wool), Copenhaver's company provided much-needed economic opportunities for rural areas.

***Rosemont*, Rosemont Industries catalog**. 1970

Copenhaver marketed Rosemont products through mail order catalogs—she had customers across the nation and abroad. The cover image here, dating from the 1920s, evokes the sense of tradition and craftsmanship she prized, of skills "handed down from mother to daughter since colonial times."

Coverlet, "Lovers' Knot" pattern with pine tree border, mid-20th century
Rosemont Industries

Woven coverlets (bed coverings) were among Rosemont's best-selling items. According to Copenhaver's catalog descriptions, the love knots of this pattern symbolize "the stability of wedded joy," and the pine tree border suggests the "strength and beauty of the mountains."

Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Copenhaver

(top portrait) **Laura Lu Copenhaver**
Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Copenhaver

Woman working at loom in southwestern Virginia, early 20th century
Courtesy of Mr. And Mrs. Tom Copenhaver

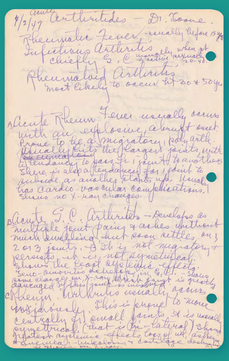
Serving Segregated Communities

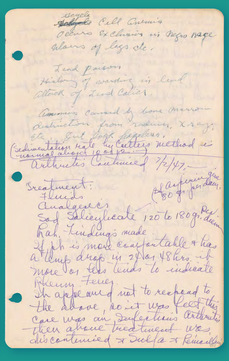
Dr. Zenobia Gilpin

As a black female doctor in the Jim Crow South, Dr. Zenobia Gilpin (1898–1948) faced both sexism and racism—but still rose to national prominence.

During an era when hospitals and other public facilities were segregated, she dedicated her career to providing medical services to Richmond's black communities.

Dr. Gilpin developed a program of public health clinics held at black churches that inspired similar programs across the nation. She also spoke out about racial disparities in healthcare.





Pages from Dr. Zenobia Gilpin's medical notebook, 1930s–1940s

A specialist in women's health—gynecology and obstetrics—Dr. Gilpin also practiced general medicine. She used a notebook to record information about a range of ailments and their treatments.

VMHC, Gift of Dorothy Radcliffe Chambers, 2006

Fighting Segregation in Higher Education

In 1935, **Alice Jackson Stuart** (1913–2001) became the first black woman to apply to graduate school at the University of Virginia, which was segregated for "whites only." Her rejection prompted civil rights activists to pressure Virginia's legislature to provide advanced educational opportunities for black students.

In lieu of desegregating the state's universities, the Commonwealth established a graduate program at Virginia State University, a black college, and funding for black students to attend universities out-of-state. Stuart's case was an important early step in the long process of school desegregation.

Alice Jackson Stuart, about 1975

Courtesy of the Library of Virginia

Dr. Zenobia Gilpin's microscope, 1938
Manufactured by Bausch & Lomb

Dr. Gilpin graduated from Howard University Medical School in Washington, D.C., in 1923. Virginia's medical schools—the Medical College of Virginia and University of Virginia—did not admit black students until 1948 and 1953.

Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia

(top portrait) **Dr. Zenobia Gilpin**, about 1940

St. Philip's post-graduate clinic (Dr. Gilpin front row, center), 1933

Special Collections and Archives, Tompkins-McCaw Library, Virginia Commonwealth University

Fighting for Virginia's Indians

Chief Anne Richardson

As chief of the Rappahannock since 1998, Chief Anne Richardson (b. 1956) was the first woman to lead a Virginia Indian tribe since the early 1700s. While contending with the long legacy of displacement, discrimination, and disenfranchisement, she works to ensure a vibrant future for the Rappahannock and to preserve their lands and cultural traditions.

Chief Richardson has observed that many people think of Virginia's Indians "like the dinosaurs that existed and died," but "My people still exist and will continue to exist."

(top portrait) **Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe**, 2009

Rod Lamkey / Washington Times

Buckskin dress and leggings, late 20th century

Chief Richardson both practices and passes on tribal customs: this is one of her outfits for dancing. She has initiated programs to teach young people native language, dance, arts, foodways, and other traditions.

Courtesy of Chief Anne Richardson, Rappahannock Tribe

Turtle hand drum, early 20th century

Several generations of Rappahannock leaders have used this drum in spiritual ceremonies.

In 2018, Chief Richardson secured federal recognition for the Rappahannock Tribe—recognition that confers sovereignty and other rights.

Courtesy of Chief Anne Richardson, Rappahannock Tribe

Chief Richardson and the leaders of other Virginia Indian tribes at a ceremony honoring federal recognition, October 3, 2018

Photo: Department of the Interior

Breaking Barriers in Wartime

Nancy Bailey Cogsdale

Nancy Bailey (later Cogsdale, 1922–2020) was among the more than 84,000 women who served in the naval reserve unit known as the WAVES, for Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service. Stationed in Norfolk, she worked as a coding and communications watch officer, encrypting and deciphering top-secret messages.

The contributions of the WAVES and their sisters in other service branches during World War II led President Harry Truman to integrate women into the armed forces in 1948.

WAVES uniform of Nancy Bailey (later Cogsdale), 1943

Southampton County native Nancy Bailey enlisted in the WAVES out of a sense of patriotic duty. She later recalled, "There is no way to tell you how I felt when I put on my first uniform and stood up to salute when 'The Star-Spangled Banner' was played."

VMHC, Gift of Nancy Bailey Bon Cogsdale

VMI Class of 2001: Breaking into the Male Bastion

The Virginia Military Institute (VMI) was the last public military school to admit women, and it did so only after a bitter legal battle.

The first female cadets entered in 1997 amid what one described as "a lot of resentment toward women." But they endured and excelled. **Erin Claunch** (now Pettyjohn) of Round Hill, for example, was appointed battalion commander, making her the third highest-ranking cadet in the corp.

First class of female cadets to graduate from the Virginia Military Institute (Erin Claunch, sixth from the right), 2001

Richmond Times-Dispatch

WAVES recruiting poster, 1943
Designed by John Falter

Women had served the U.S. military in supporting roles and auxiliary units in previous wars, but the WAVES were the first to have equal military status and benefits (such as pensions and disability protection) to men. Although many WAVES encountered sexism, Bailey described her service as "challenging" and "one of my most treasured experiences."

Navy Art Collection, Naval History and Heritage Command

(top portrait) **Nancy Bailey**, 1943

Women's Wartime Contributions

"It all depends on me!"
The Blender
November, 1943

The Blender, November 1943

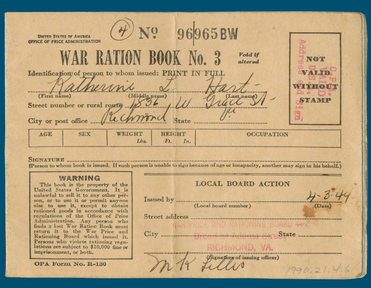
World War II opened new opportunities for women on the home front, as well as in the military. In the defense industry, for instance, female workers filled jobs traditionally held by men.

This cover of *The Blender*, the employee newsletter of the DuPont nylon plant in Martinsville, underscores how women were a vital link in the chain of the nation's war effort.

Corsage, about 1942

Clair Bugg (1884–1976) of Farmville wore this patriotic corsage made of postal savings stamps that could be saved up to purchase war bonds. Such bonds helped the government fund what became the most expensive war in U.S. history.

VMHC, Gift of the Estate of Clair B. Holland



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION

№ 96965BW

WAR RATION BOOK No. 3

Fold if altered

Identification of person to whom issued: PRINT IN FULL

Katherine L. Hart
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Street number or rural route 1532 W. Grace St.

City or post office Richmond State Va.

AGE	SEX	WEIGHT Lbs.	HEIGHT Ft.	In.	OCCUPATION

Signature .....
(Person to whom book is issued. If such person is unable to sign because of age or incapacity, another may sign in his behalf.)

NOT VALID WITHOUT STAMP

WARNING
This book is the property of the United States Government. It is unlawful to sell it or any other person, or to use it or permit any other person to use it, except as authorized. Persons who buy or sell rationed goods in accordance with regulations of the Office of Price Administration, Any person who alters this book or any coupon or certificate in it, or who violates any provision of the War Price and Rationing Board which issued it, may be prosecuted. Criminal penalties are subject to $10,000 fine or imprisonment, or both.

OPA Form No. R-120

LOCAL BOARD ACTION

Issued by .....
(Local board number)

Street address .....

City ..... State .....

(Signature of issuing officer)

4-3-44
(Date)

1990.21.46

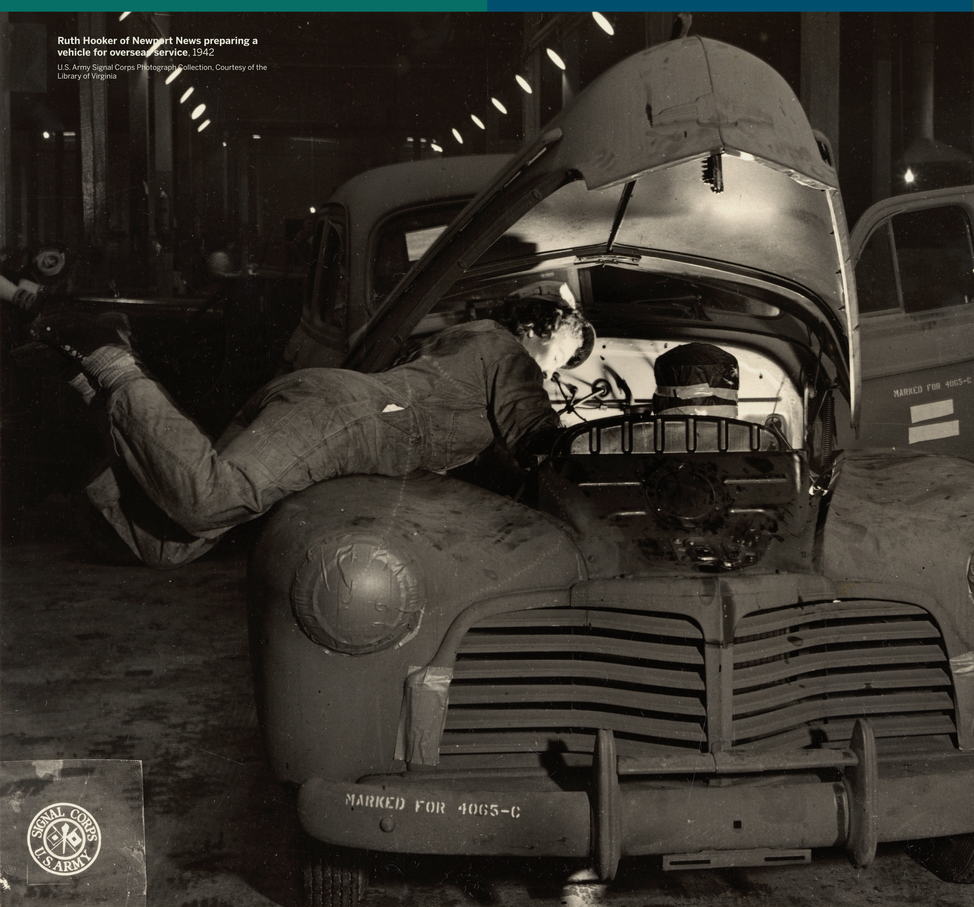
War ration book of Katherine Hart of Richmond (cover), April 1944

VMHC, Gift of Katherine H. Belew

War ration book of Nellie S. Barnard of Richmond (interior page), about 1944

VMHC, Gift of Mrs. Charles H. Rueger

As household managers, American women helped the war effort by rationing—a sacrifice deemed both necessary and patriotic. To ensure adequate supplies for defense needs, the government rationed commodities such as sugar, fuel, and food items, and issued booklets like these with stamps for obtaining the regulated quantity of rationed goods.



Ruth Hooker of Newport News preparing a vehicle for overseas service, 1942

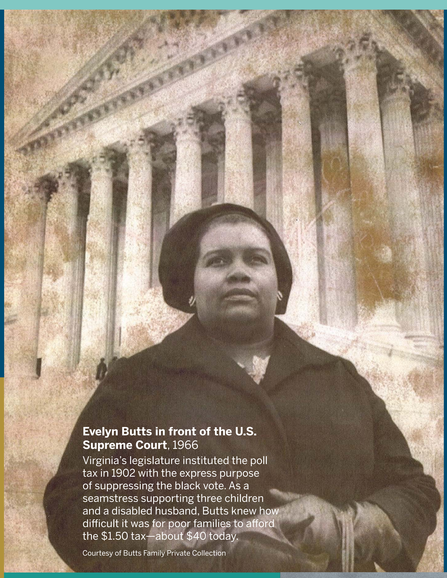
U.S. Army Signal Corps Photograph Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Virginia

Civil Rights Warrior

Evelyn Butts

Evelyn Butts (1924–1993), a Norfolk seamstress, civil rights activist, and community organizer, helped strike down the poll tax—one of the most effective means by which Virginia and other southern states disenfranchised black voters. She was a plaintiff in *Harper* v. *Virginia Board of Electors*, a U.S. Supreme Court case that declared the poll tax unconstitutional in 1966.

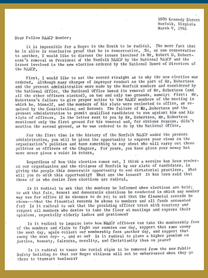
Butts was also an important figure in local politics, leading voter registration drives and community-based political organizations.



Evelyn Butts in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, 1966

Virginia's legislature instituted the poll tax in 1902 with the express purpose of suppressing the black vote. As a seamstress supporting three children and a disabled husband, Butts knew how difficult it was for poor families to afford the $1.50 tax—about $40 today.

Courtesy of Butts Family Private Collection



1809 Kennedy Street
Norfolk, Virginia
March 9, 1961

Dear Fellow NAACP Member;

It is impossible for a Negro in the South to be radical. The mere fact that he is alive is conclusive proof that he is conservative. So, we can conservative to another, I would like to discuss the issues involved in Mr. Robert H. Scherer's letter of March 7 to the membership of the Norfolk Chapter. The issues involved in the new election ordered by the National Board of Directors of the NAACP.

First, I would like to set the record straight as to why the new election was ordered. Although many charges of improper conduct on the part of Mr. Scherer and the Executive Committee were made by the membership and reported to the National Office, the National Office based its removal of Mr. Scherer and all the other officers elected, on two and only two grounds. The first was the failure of the Executive Committee to call a meeting of the membership at which my removal, and the election of the slate were considered. The second was the failure of the Executive Committee to notify Mr. Scherer and the present administration to permit qualified candidates to use against him and his slate. Contrary to the statement in Mr. Scherer's letter, the National Office sanctioned only the first ground for his removal and, for obvious reasons, didn't mention the second ground, as he was ordered to do by the National Office.

For the first time in the history of the Norfolk NAACP under the present administration, you will be given the opportunity to express your views on the administration of the Chapter, and to express your views on the candidates for office or officers of the Chapter. For years, you have given your money but were never given a voice in return.

Regardless of how this election comes out, I think a service has been rendered our organization and the citizens of Norfolk by our slate of candidates. It will be a sad day for democracy in Norfolk if you do not participate in this election. I will say no more on this opportunity! What are the issues? It has been said that those of us who desire free elections are radical.

It is radical to set up the machinery to be followed when elections are held. It is radical to set out the steps which must be conducted in which any member may run for office if he chooses to do so; to set that the financial records be audited and reported to the membership at least once every six months. It is radical to set that the presiding officer votes with everyone and respect all members who desire to take the floor at meetings and express their opinions, especially elderly ladies and gentlemen!

It is radical to imagine into how NAACP officers can take the membership from the dictatorial rule of a few individuals and return the NAACP to the people, the rank and file, where it belongs, and support that every member has a right to express his opinion at meetings and vote his conscience without fear of reprisal.

It is radical to remove the racial slurs to be removed from the new public facilities which the Norfolk citizens will not be embarrassed when they go there to transact business!

It is radical to think that steps should be properly given to our young courageous students and children, who suffer jailing, violence and intimidation to bring about changes for our benefit! It is radical to insist that this result not be used by the Executive Committee for personal aggrandizement, thinking to have accomplished their function by "peaceful capitulation"!

It is radical to use our efforts to secure employment for Negroes free from discriminatory bars, and not be either adverse or afraid to engage in peaceful picketing so that Negroes can work and buy food for their children like any other citizen. Mr. Scherer, in his letter, has condemned picketing, and as a member of Board of Directors, we removed the officers of the local branch, radical- ore they radical for wanting the Norfolk Chapter to be one they can be proud of!

It is radical to throw it out and work for a City where Negroes are citizens, free and proud, living peacefully and in prosperity, in good times and bad times, and participating in every area of life! Are these things radical?

So what that we are militant in fighting for the civil rights of Negro citizens! We are supposed to be a militant organization, it was founded for this purpose.

Because many of us, no account of our jobs, our families, or other reasons, cannot be militant, the NAACP was established to be militant for us. If the NAACP is not going to be militant, why do we need it? We already have peaceful social clubs, fraternal organizations.

The most important issue in this election, as fellow members, is that stated by Mr. Scherer, "Who will run the Norfolk Chapter?" Will it be the people who are to receive the benefits and the conduct of the present administration.

It is time for a change to an administration that can lead the NAACP in battle! Is the Negroes of Norfolk "Negro with justice and dignity" or that there can be a Negro with justice and dignity.

We invite you to attend the election on Monday, March 13th at 8 p.m., Second Calvary Baptist Church, Crigger and Godfrey avenues. We ask you to support the Militant Candidates who, when elected, will remain your servants and militant workers in the cause for freedom.

Very truly yours,

Evelyn Butts
(Mrs.) Evelyn Butts

Letter from Evelyn Butts to members of Norfolk chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), March 9, 1961

Butts challenged injustice wherever she saw it. In this letter to fellow members of Norfolk's NAACP, she explains why she called for new elections against a "dictatorial" leadership and defends herself against the charge of radicalism, asking:

"Is it radical to dream of and work for a City where Negroes are citizens, free and proud, living peacefully and in prosperity?"

Courtesy of Butts Family Private Collection

(top portrait) **Evelyn Butts**, 1960s

Courtesy of Butts Family Private Collection

(right) **Ella Baker giving speech at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta**, 1964

© 1976 George Ballis / Take Stock

Unheralded Heroines

Women in the civil rights movement were often overshadowed by male leaders, yet they served critical roles in the fight for equality for black Americans.

Norfolk-born **Ella Baker** (1903–1986) was an influential civil rights activist who criticized not only racism, but also sexism in the movement and society at-large. She advocated grassroots organizing and participatory democracy—seen in her encouragement of young activists to form the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1960.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) event in Farmville, Virginia, 1966

The New York Times / Redux

Expanding LGBTQ+ Rights

Carol Schall & Mary Townley

In 2014, this Chesterfield County couple helped overturn Virginia's ban on same-sex marriage as plaintiffs in *Bostic* v. *Shaefer*, a landmark case in the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

When they filed their lawsuit, Carol Schall and Mary Townley had been together for decades and had a daughter, Emily. In 2008, they married in California—the first state to allow same-sex marriage—but Virginia did not recognize their union.

This family's battle for legal equality reflects ongoing activism for LGBTQ+ rights.

Mary Townley's wedding dress and jacket, about 2008

Townley wore this dress for the couple's 2008 wedding and again, in 2014, when they renewed their vows in their home state—on the very day that the *Bostic* v. *Schaefer* decision overturning Virginia's marriage ban became final.

VMHC, Gift of Carol Schall, Mary Townley, and Emily Schall-Townley

(top portrait) **Carol Schall (left) and Mary Townley (right)**

VCU News / American Foundation for Equal Rights

"Marriage Is a Basic Civil Right" poster, 2014

The *Bostic* v. *Schaefer* decision declared that all Virginians have a "fundamental right to marry," citing *Loving*—the 1967 Supreme Court case that struck down bans on interracial marriage—as a precedent. In 2015, the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide.

VMHC, Gift of Carol Schall, Mary Townley, and Emily Schall-Townley

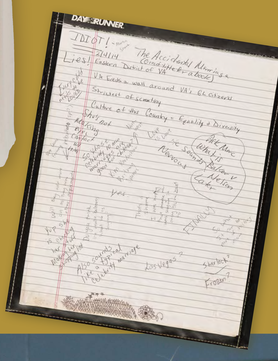
Marriage
is a
Basic Civil Right
Loving v. Virginia (1967)

American Foundation for Equal Rights www.afer.org

DayRunner® notebook with comments by Carol Schall, Mary Townley, and Emily Schall-Townley, May–July 2014

"Culture of this Country = Equality & Diversity" is one of the notes that Schall, Townley, and their daughter wrote to each other in the courtroom. Another comment, "So those celebrity 10 min. marriages are good for children?" responds to the opposing side's claim that children raised without a traditional mother-father unit are disadvantaged.

VMHC, Gift of Carol Schall, Mary Townley, and Emily Schall-Townley



Carol Schall and Mary Townley's vow renewal ceremony conducted by Attorney General Mark Herring, October 6, 2014

Brad Kutner

Feminist Activist

Flora Crater

Feminism's "first wave" secured equal voting rights, but not full equality. The 1960s ushered in a second wave of the feminist movement with women fighting systemic sexism in a male-dominated society.

Flora Crater (1914-2009) of Orange County was a leading voice for women's equality in Virginia. A talented organizer, she established the state's first chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1971 and campaigned for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), among other activities.

Susan B. Anthony necklace, about 1975

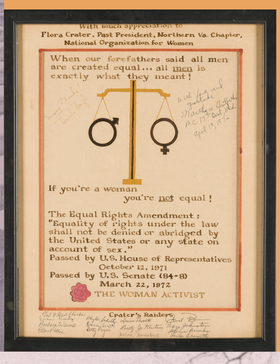
Flora Crater regularly wore this necklace based on the death mask of the early suffrage activist Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906).

Courtesy of Walt Crater and Vivian Gray

"Crater for Lt. Governor" button, 1973

In 1973, Crater became the first female to run for lieutenant governor in Virginia, although her campaign was unsuccessful. She was motivated by the conviction that women "have to get into positions of power where they can be making the rules."

Courtesy of Walt Crater and Vivian Gray


With much appreciation to
Flora Crater, Past President, Northern Va. Chapter,
National Organization for Women

When our forefathers said all men are created equal... all men is exactly what they meant!

If you're a woman you're not equal!

The Equal Rights Amendment:
"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex."
Passed by U.S. House of Representatives October 12, 1971
Passed by U.S. Senate (84-8) March 22, 1972
THE WOMAN ACTIVIST

Crater's Raiders

Certificate of Appreciation given to Flora Crater and signed by "The Crater's Raiders," 1972

Crater was instrumental in getting the U.S. Congress to pass the ERA in 1972. She led a group of women—called "The Crater's Raiders"—in a dogged lobbying campaign. One longtime senator said of their efforts, "I've never seen anything like it in all my years," and a newspaper account credited Crater with "one of the coups of the century."

Courtesy of Walt Crater and Vivian Gray

(top portrait) **Flora Crater**

Courtesy of Walt Crater and Vivian Gray

(far left) **ERA protest at U.S. Capitol (Flora Crater front row, center)**, October 7, 1970

Bettmann via Getty Images

ERA Rally in Capitol Square, Richmond, 1984

Richmond Times-Dispatch Collection, The Valentine; Photo: Bob Brown

Equal Rights Amendment

Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

—Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

Shortly after the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, suffrage activist Alice Paul started a campaign to enshrine equality for women in the U.S. Constitution. The proposed Equal Rights Amendment was controversial from the beginning, with opponents worrying that it would strip women of special legal protections such as maximum hours for working mothers.

Pro- and anti-ERA activism surged during the 1970s and early '80s, and again in recent years with a renewed push for ratification. Debates continue today: while many Americans support the ERA, others question the ratification process or see the amendment as unnecessary, arguing that existing laws already ban gender discrimination.

Do you think we should amend the Constitution with the ERA?

Anti-ERA button, 1970s

Conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly (1924–2016) spearheaded a nationwide grassroots movement to block the ERA in the 1970s and '80s, arguing that it would destroy traditional families, end spousal support for women, subject women to the military draft, and create unisex bathrooms.

In Virginia, the anti-ERA campaign was led by Alyse O'Neill and Eva Fleming Scott, the first woman elected to Virginia's senate in 1979. The General Assembly voted down the ERA in 1982.

Key Dates in ERA History

1923 The ERA is first introduced in U.S. Congress. Reintroduced annually for decades; it languishes in congressional committees.

1972 Congress passes the ERA. Amendment goes to state legislatures to vote on ratification amid pro- and anti-ERA activism.

1978 Congress extends original ratification deadline to 1982.

1982 At deadline, the ERA falls three states short of the 38 required for ratification. Pro-ERA efforts continue.

2017 & 2018 Nevada and Illinois, respectively, pass the ERA.

January 2020 Virginia passes the ERA, becoming the 38th and final state needed for ratification. Legal debates begin about the validity of ratification after the deadline.

Pro-ERA button, 1970s

VMHC, Gift of Elizabeth Stevens Brinson

ERA demonstration, 1970s

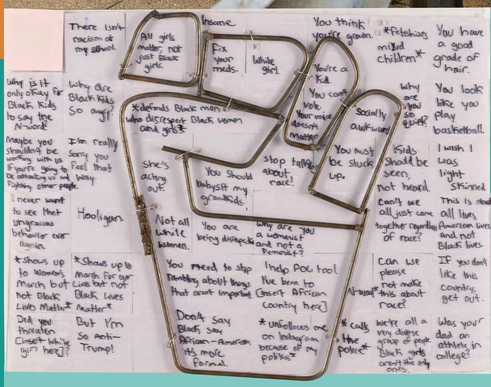
Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida

The Rising Generation

Stephanie Younger

The wave of police killings of unarmed black people in the 2010s spurred Stephanie Younger (b. 2002) to activism. Seeking to forge a more inclusive, peaceful, and just society, she joined the Richmond Youth Peace Project, which teaches leadership skills and non-violent conflict resolution.

Younger has also fought for juvenile justice reform, gun violence prevention, and gender and racial equity. "Even though we can't vote, young people … are the catalysts of social and political change."



Untitled, 2018

Younger uses creative expression—writing and art—to address the intersection of racism and sexism in her life. For instance, as a woman of color, she experiences different forms of discrimination than a white woman would.

In this work, Younger juxtaposed a metal silhouette of a Black Power fist against a background of Post-It notes inscribed with statements people have said to her.

Courtesy of Stephanie Younger

BLACK FEMINIST COLLECTIVE

Black Feminist Collective logo, 2017

In 2017, Younger founded the Black Feminist Collective, an online platform that gives voice to marginalized groups.

Courtesy of Black Feminist Collective

(top portrait) **Stephanie Younger**
Photo: Phuong Tran/ACLU of Virginia

(top right) **Stephanie Younger at Women's March RVA**, 2019
Photo: Jesse Peters

(below) **Stephanie Younger at the Virginia Prison Reform Rally**, 2018
Photo: Phuong Tran/ACLU of Virginia

Female Activism Today

Activism is essential to our society. By not speaking up, you forfeit your opportunity to participate and make a difference.

—Deb Wake
President, League of Women Voters of Virginia

Recent years have witnessed a surge of female activism surrounding persistent sexism, racism, and gender-based disparities in America. Like the suffragists of a century ago, contemporary activists build networks, organize marches, and demand change, but using new tools of the digital age.

In addition, record numbers of women have won elected office, including in Virginia's General Assembly. This trend underscores the importance of representation—of having a seat at the table where decisions are made and of having a government that reflects the American people.

What year will women break the ultimate glass ceiling—the U.S. presidency?

Pussyhat worn at the Women's March on Washington, D.C., January 21, 2017
Knit by Ryan Norris

Perhaps the most iconic emblem of contemporary female activism is the pink Pussyhat worn in the Women's March, held annually in cities around the world since 2017. Originally designed to signal opposition to President Donald Trump, this hat in the shape of cat's ears symbolizes female empowerment.

VMHC, Gift of Alyssa Murray

Protest sign from the Women's March in Washington, D.C., January 21, 2017

Suzanne Summers LaPierre of Annandale, Virginia, created and carried this sign in the first Women's March in Washington—the largest single-day protest in U.S. history. Satellite marches in cities around the world represented a groundswell of female activism.

VMHC, Gift of Suzanne Summers LaPierre

(far right) **Black Lives Matter march**, 2016
Photo: Alisdare Hickson

Virginia's Speaker of the House, Eileen Filler-Corn (center), and Senate President Pro Tempore, Louise Lucas (right)—both female firsts in their positions—on opening day of the General Assembly's 2020 Session, January 8, 2020
Zach Gibson / Getty Image News via Getty Images