

Press Release
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**Virginia Museum of History & Culture to Recreate Historic Suffragist Photo in Capitol Square
Photo to be Signature Image of Upcoming Exhibit Marking the Centennial of the 19th Amendment,
*Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Suffrage to Today***

Richmond, VA — The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, granting women the right to vote. This historic centennial offers an unprecedented opportunity to commemorate an important milestone of our democracy, and to further explore its relevance to issues of equal rights and voting today. To mark this centennial, the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC) will recreate a famous photograph of Virginia suffragists with a select group of present-day women for a new photo called “Today’s Agents of Change.”

The historic photo taken in 1915 features 17 members of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia posing in front of the Washington Equestrian Monument on Capitol Square in Richmond. “The 1915 photograph is one of the most iconic images of the women’s suffrage movement in Virginia, but it features only the socially prominent white women who were members of the Equal Suffrage League, not the full range of women who fought for the right to vote,” said Elaine McFadden, “Today’s Agents of Change” Project Coordinator. “I wondered, what if we had the chance to thoughtfully recreate this image with an inclusive intention? It would be a powerful statement linking the past with the present and it would be a moving tribute to all female agents of change.”

The original photograph was used specifically to promote the first large-scale pro-suffrage film, *Your Girl and Mine* (now lost), and was produced collaboratively by the National American Woman Suffrage Association and Selig Studio in Chicago, Illinois. After the release of the film, this photo appeared in numerous publications and became a recognizable symbol of the suffrage movement.

The VMHC’s recreation of the historic photo will include about 20 contemporary women who, like the suffragists of the 1910s, are fighting to break barriers for women, to improve their communities, and to make Virginia a more equitable and just society. Unlike the 1915 image, however, “Today’s Agents of Change” will feature a more diverse group of women in terms of age, racial and ethnic identity, region, and cause or sphere of influence.

“In making our selection of change makers for the photograph, our primary goal was to bring together a group of women who represent a broad range of female activism and accomplishments,” said Dr. Karen Sherry, Curator of Museum Collections. “Of course, we recognize that there are many more extraordinary women activists in Virginia, but we had to limit the number of participants. This photo is a representative sampling, not a comprehensive catalog of contemporary female activism.”

The group photograph will be showcased in the wider, statewide commemoration of women’s suffrage, which includes the exhibition *Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women’s Suffrage to Today*. Together, this exhibition and photograph will spotlight the diversity and dynamism of women’s civic activism throughout Virginia.”

To date, the following women are slated to appear in “Today’s Agents of Change”:

- Chief Lynette Lewis Allston, the Nottoway Indian Tribe, is a leading voice for Virginia’s native populations
- Viola Osborne Baskerville, a lawyer, public servant, and advocate for the preservation of African-American history
- Diane Marrow Beirne, Executive Director of The Woman’s Club, and the Bolling Haxall House Foundation, an organization that has been promoting intellectual exchange for more than a century
- Regina H. Boone, a distinguished Photojournalist and powerful voice for social justice and equality
- The Honorable Leslie Byrne, the first woman to represent Virginia in the U.S. House of Representatives
- Nico Cathcart, a muralist and painter who uses art to advocate for women and girls
- Constance Chamberlin, Former CEO of H.O.M.E. (Housing Opportunities Made Equal) and fair housing activist

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- Sylvia Clute, attorney, Founder of The Woman’s Bank, and advocate-educator for reforming our justice system
- Christy S. Coleman, Executive Director of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, is renowned for her leadership and groundbreaking work in the museum field
- Doris Crouse-Mays as President of the Virginia AFL-CIO, fights for the rights of workers and working families
- Dr. Andrea N. Douglas, Executive Director of the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, who works to promote racial equity
- Rachel Scott Everett, one of the lead organizers of the Richmond Women’s March
- Aurora A. Higgs, LGBTQ+ rights activist
- Kati Hornung, Campaign Coordinator for VAratifyERA, the group leading the effort to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment
- Dr. Tiffany Jana, as CEO of TMI Consulting, Inc., promotes diversity and inclusion in the workplace
- Katie Koestner, Executive Director of Take Back the Night Foundation, which fights to stop sexual violence against women
- Emily McCoy, a long-time activist for women’s rights who has been instrumental in the creation of the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Association in Fairfax Station
- Claudette Monroy, educator and immigrant rights advocate
- Angela Patton, CEO of Girls for a Change, an organization that develops leadership skills and opportunities for girls of color
- Jennifer Hoyt Tidwell, founder of CLAW (Charlottesville Lady Arm Wrestlers), a grassroots fundraising organization for women’s causes
- Keri Treadway, Richmond public school teacher and founder of Virginia Educators United
- Sandra Gioia Treadway, Librarian and State Archivist of Virginia, is a cultural leader and leading expert on women’s history in Virginia
- Deb Wake, President of the League of Women Voters in Virginia, the successor to the Equal Suffrage League
- Dr. Janice B. Underwood, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Commonwealth of Virginia
- Bessida Cauthorne White, longtime civil rights and feminist activist, and leader of the Middle Peninsula African-American Historical and Genealogical Society
- Shayy Winn, American Idol contestant, singer and supporter of LiveArt, The Richmond Youth Peace Summit, and Generation Dreams
- Chelsea Higgs Wise, social worker, inclusion educator, and prominent activist for a range of gender, racial and social justice issues

****Full biographies of all participants will be available online soon****

The “Today’s Agents of Change” photoshoot will take place in Capitol Square in Richmond on February 3, 2020 (with alternative dates for bad weather). The photograph will be unveiled on March 8, 2020 and will remain on view in conjunction with the *Agents of Change* exhibition. In addition, the VMHC is continuing to collect oral histories, stories and materials related to women’s history as part of its mission to preserve and share the stories of all Virginians. If you know a female agent of change, please share her story with us by contacting Dr. Karen Sherry, Curator of Museum Collections at 804.342.9683 or ksherry@virginiahistory.org.

The VMHC would like to thank its partners who provided in-kind support and expertise to help make this historic event possible; Orange Frame, LLC, Linden Row Inn, Garnish Catering, Party Perfect, Reggie Nash, RVA on Wheels, Worth Higgins & Associates, and Gianna Grace Photography.

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The Virginia Museum of History & Culture is owned and operated by the Virginia Historical Society – a private, non-profit organization established in 1831. The historical society is the oldest cultural organization in Virginia, and one of the oldest and most distinguished history organizations in the nation. For use in its state history museum and its renowned research library, the historical society cares for a collection of nearly nine million items representing the ever-evolving story of Virginia.

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture is located at 428 N Arthur Ashe Boulevard in Richmond's Museum District. Hours are Monday – Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the galleries and museum shop, Monday – Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the research library. For more information call 804.340.1800, visit VirginiaHistory.org, or connect on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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