

Summary: The Struggle for Equality

The Fight for Women's Rights

In the 1800s, women in the United States did not have all of their rights protected. Often they could not go to college, own property, or hold certain jobs. They could not vote so they had no say in government. Women worked together to change the unfair laws. Susan B. Anthony was a leader who believed both men and women should have a say in a democracy.

In 1890, women formed the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the first president. NAWSA held meetings and made speeches. Many people did not like the idea of women voting. People sometimes attacked suffragists, but the suffragists did not give up. Some states started giving women the right to vote. In 1917, Montana elected the first Congresswoman, Jeannette Rankin.

During World War I, women filled the jobs of men who went to fight. Women's hard work during the war helped to pass the Nineteenth Amendment. By 1918, fifteen states recognized women's right to vote. In 1920, the states approved the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. It gave all women the right to vote.

African American Rights

The government recognized African American men's right to vote after the Civil War. But most could not use the right because of prejudice against them. W.E.B. Du Bois was a scholar and writer. He was an activist who worked for equal rights for African Americans. In 1909, Du Bois and other black leaders formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP's goal was to gain equal opportunity for African Americans in voting, education, and the legal system. They held meetings, wrote articles, and spoke with members of Congress. They helped the movement for equal rights in the United States.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

prejudice *noun*, an unjust negative opinion about a group of people.

activist *noun*, a person who takes action to change social conditions or laws.

suffragist *noun*, a person who worked for the right to vote



After You Read

REVIEW What were some of the inequalities the women's movement wanted to correct?

Underline two sentences that tell what women could not do in the early 1900s.

REVIEW What actions did the NAACP take to reduce inequalities in the United States? Underline the sentence that tells how the NAACP worked to educate people about equal rights for African Americans.