### American Suffragist Movement (1870-1920)

- **Origins**: Began in 1848, when more than 300 people gathered at the nation’s first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York.
  - **Organizers**: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Martha C. Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, and Jane Hunt. (All but Hunt were ardent anti-slavery activists.)
  - **Founding document/speech**: “A Declaration of Sentiments,” written by Stanton. Called for the “right [of women] to the elective franchise.” Available at [elizabethcadystantonhometown.org/declarationofsentiments1848.pdf](http://elizabethcadystantonhometown.org/declarationofsentiments1848.pdf)

- **Movement suspended (1861-1865)**: Organizing for women’s suffrage was temporarily suspended during the Civil War.

- **Movement conflicts**: After the war, the movement divided when Congress gave African American men the vote and denied it to women.
  - Some among the movement founders, including Lucy Stone and Frederick Douglass, argued that “it was the Negro’s hour,” and that women must be patient.
  - Other founders, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony disagreed and broke with Stone, Douglass, and others.

- **Competing strategies**: The rival organizations prioritized different goals.
  - Stone, Douglass, and their allies launched state-by-state campaigns for women’s suffrage and won in Wyoming (1869).
  - Stanton, Anthony, and others campaigned for a constitutional amendment that guaranteed women’s right to vote.

- **Unification**: In 1890 the rival wings of the suffrage movement united in the National Women’s Suffrage Association (NWSA).

- **Strategies**:
  - State-by-state campaigns: Wins in Colorado (1893); Utah and Idaho (1896); Washington (1910); California (1911); and Oregon, Kansas, and Arizona (1912).
  - Increasingly militant campaign for a constitutional amendment.

- **Success**: Enactment of the 19th Amendment in August 1920.

### English Suffragist/Suffragette Movements (1870-1920)

- **Origins**: The organized suffrage movement began in 1866, when a number of prominent women’s rights reformers began petitioning Parliament and holding public meetings to win the vote. They were known as suffragists.
  - **Organizers**: Suffragist groups existed throughout England and had many different names. All aspired to win the right to vote for women through constitutional, peaceful means.
    - At the national level, key individuals included Millicent Fawcett and Lydia Becker.

- **The “doldrums”**: From 1870 to 1905, the suffragists were unable to generate either political support or popular enthusiasm for national women’s suffrage.

- **Reinvigoration of the movement**: Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia founded the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1903 – a more radical organization than its predecessors. Its slogan was “Deeds Not Words.” The Pankhurs and their followers changed the terms of debate. A journalist dubbed them suffragettes and the name stuck.

- **Militancy and violence**:
  - Hundreds of thousands of women pushed women’s suffrage to center stage by engaging in acts of mass militancy and civil disobedience, including hunger strikes while in prison.
  - In June 1913 the suffragette Emily Wilding Davison threw herself under the King’s horse at the Derby racecourse and was killed. She was the only suffragette to die for the cause and was made into a martyr.

- **Success**: In February 1918, the Government passed an act giving women the vote if they were over the age of 30 and either owned property or rented for at least £5/year, or were the wife of someone who did. As a result, 8.5 million women became entitled to vote in the General Election of 1918. On 2 July 1928, a law was passed allowing all women over the age of 21 to vote.

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### Part II: The movements’ similarities and dissimilarities

**The Movements’ Similarities**

Despite their different histories, the American and English movements were similar in three ways.

- First, personal relationships and organizational connections linked the movements, and these resulted in the development of shared demands and strategies. For example,
  - Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott conceived the idea of an American women’s rights convention while attending the World Anti-Slavery Conference in London in 1840. Stanton and later US women’s rights reformers remained in contact with their English sisters.
  - The Pankhursts made a number of visits to the United States.
  - American suffragists, including Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, worked with the Pankhurs in England and then Paul and Burns introduced the English suffragettes’ militancy and pageantry to the US women’s suffrage movement.

- Second, women’s rights activists in both countries fought from outside the political establishment, not as part of it. That is, neither movement received support from political parties and national governments.

- Third, movement activists and leaders in America and England were overwhelmingly white and middle class, and their arguments for women’s suffrage reflected their racial and social identities.
  - As a result, African Americans were excluded from white-led organizations and formed their own suffrage organizations.
  - Despite the predominance of middle-to-upper class women in campaign decision-making, large numbers of working-class women comprised the rank and file in urban centers. In the U.S. working-class activists included large numbers of immigrant women.
  - The class and racial biases of (some but not all) movement leaders shaped their arguments to national political leaders.
    - In the first phase of the American and British campaigns, the arguments for suffrage emphasized the equality of all women and all men and women.
    - In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, activists on both sides of the Atlantic emphasized the contributions that a female electorate could make to nation and empire building.

### The Movements’ Dissimilarities

The U.S. and English movements differed in two main ways owing to the structure of government in each nation. This fact also explains the greater militancy of the English movement.

- First, the qualifications for suffrage differed in each nation, and these differences shaped arguments for the vote.
  - In England, unlike the United States, suffrage was by 1866 based on property as well as gender.
    - Political parties were not interested in expanding suffrage to all, and,
    - The radical and labor movements, which argued for expanding adult suffrage, ignored women.
    - Thus, given the exclusion of non-propertied working-class men from the electorate, Votes for Women in England meant votes for propertied women.
  - In the US, where race was more divisive than class, the franchise had been extended to most white male citizens by 1836.
    - The 14th and 15th Amendments (1868 and 1870, respectively) guaranteed the franchise to African American men and excluded women. Thereafter, issues of race and racism shaped the US women’s suffrage movement.
    - African American women were denied admission into the major suffrage organizations and meetings.
    - Some white suffragists argued for women’s suffrage in white supremacist terms, stating that female voters could curb the influence of the so-called “immigrant and Black menace.”

- Second, each movement confronted differing types of government.
  - Because England has a parliamentary government, the ruling party sets the nation’s political agenda. Suffragettes targeted the party at the national level.
  - This was not the case in the U.S., therefore suffragists campaigned state by state and at the federal level.

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