



Columns The Suffragist

# Engage 2020 Brings National Suffrage Month into the Home

Don't just read The Suffragist, live The Suffragist



Ryan Pitkin • August 11, 2020 3 minutes read

The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified on Aug. 18, 1920. To celebrate, the U.S. Congress designated August 2020 as “National Suffrage Month.” You, too, can celebrate from home with several online events that are sure to boost your knowledge of this important moment in history, including an impressive series from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, Engage 2020, [which consists of virtual events scheduled through the election](#). You can celebrate by sharing what you learn, too.

As we’ve discussed in [columns past](#), the suffrage movement in the United States has a long and complex history, though [North Carolina women weren’t interested](#) until practically the last minute. African-American women bravely [sparked the movement in the 1820s](#), and the [Seneca Falls Convention](#) in 1848 pushed it forward. Many women fought — and some were [arrested and tortured](#) — for decades so that women today can enjoy the right to vote. The [1918 flu pandemic](#) played an important role, and men came up with all sorts of [whacked reasons](#) why women shouldn’t be allowed to vote. White women [attempted to push Black women out of the picture](#), and, truth is,

**Black women** didn't fully enjoy the benefits of the 19th Amendment until the Voting Rights Act, which recently celebrated its 55th anniversary.

“It’s important that these stories are told, but it’s more important that stories are shared,” says Hannah Terrell, Branch Leader for the **Allegra Westbrook Regional-Beatties Ford Library** and the director of Engage 2020. “That’s one of the reasons that makes me very proud to be part of this project: I get to share the stories that have been told with those who may not have ever heard of them.”



*A suffrage march in Washington D.C. in 1913. (National archives)*

With that, she'd like you to tune in to the many ways the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is telling suffrage stories — and particularly stories of Black women's involvement, in partnership with the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and with financial support from Pivotal Ventures (a Melinda Gates company). You do not have to be a member of the library

to participate, and the public is welcome to participate in all of the events, which are virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The full name of the event series is Engage 2020: Look Back, Move Forward, but Terrell is also interested in capturing the stories that are being created right now, right here in Charlotte.



*Women's suffrage supporters picket at the White House. (Photo courtesy of National Park Service)*

Engage 2020 is encouraging us to [look back at suffrage stories past](#) via several virtual museum exhibits that are available including “[Standing up for Change: African American Women and the Civil Rights Movement](#)” (National Women’s History Museum) and “[How did Women Win the 19th Amendment? A Piecemeal Path to Women’s Voting Rights](#)” (U.S. National Archives) while asking important questions like, “Why did Black women march at the back of the famous 1913 Suffrage Parade in Washington, DC?”

Parents, teachers and scholars may be interested in [the videos, created and posted by library staff](#) so as to help educate young

students who may be at home this coming school year. There is also a [librarian-curated list of reference materials](#) for those of you who would like to dig in deeper.



Engage 2020 encourages us to move forward, too. How do you do that? The program links to [the 2020 Census, voter registration information and information about this year's polling places](#). If you haven't already, [complete your Census form](#) and prepare to vote.

The program also [encourages you to tell your story by asking](#): “What memory of the year 2020 do you think will stay with you?,” “What in 2020 has inspired you?” and “What is one thing you'd like to say to future generations who may read this years from now?”

Additionally, Engage 2020 is asking you to be present. There are virtual events being held now through the election that you can access at no cost. Some of those events: Tues., Aug. 11 at 7 p.m., [“COVID-19's Disproportionate Impact on People of Color”](#); Aug. 12 at 10 a.m., [“Bridging the Social Distance: A Community Conversation”](#); and even [book groups, conversations about the 1619 Project, a teen advisory council and photography classes](#) in case you, too, are working to capture the events of today for posterity.





*A suffrage march in Washington D.C. in 1913. (National archives)*

[Check in regularly](#) with the Engage 2020 calendar, as Terrell says more events are being added. Stay tuned for virtual events at UNC Charlotte, Johnson C. Smith University and Queens University this fall. Those events will include local politicians and are also free and open to the public.

There are more ways to tune into the suffrage movement — past, present and future — online, too. The State Library of North Carolina offers a [“She Changed the World: NC Women Barrier Breaking Moments” timeline](#). There is the [Sarah K. Evans Project](#), a public art project that tells the story of a woman refusing to give up her seat on a bus here in North Carolina prior to Rosa Parks’ famous, and similar, move in Montgomery, Alabama. And, of course, there are multiple hashtags to follow: [#19SuffrageStories](#) is happening now to elevate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment this month, but there’s also [#NCherstory](#) and [#SheChangedTheWorld](#), which were started by North Carolina historical organizations, and, of course, [#19thAmendment](#) and [#Suffrage](#) for a countrywide view.

And, remember, as you learn also be sure to share.



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