

The Remedial Herstory Project

INQUIRY-BASED LESSON PLAN

STAGING THE INQUIRY

For this inquiry, teachers should consider opening with an intriguing and open ended question, then provide some background on this topic generally in the form of a video, brief lecture, or presentation. Close the introduction by asking students what questions they have, guide them in discussion to the question for the inquiry, highlighted at the top of the next page.

ACTIVITY TASKS

- Pose a broad open ended question. Provide background information.
- Students respond to questions in this packet independently or with a partner.
- Consider doing one of the following to extend the exercise:
 - Facilitate student discussion of the compelling question.
 - Facilitate a 4-corner debate.
 - Facilitate a structured academic controversy.
 - Students assume the characters involved and discuss the compelling question in character.
- Students craft an argument.

C3 FRAMEWORK

D1.1.9-12. Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue in the field.

D1.2.9-12. Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling question.

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

D2.His.10.9-12. Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique

the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

Inquiry Activity: Were white suffragists racist?

In the last few decades increasing numbers of historians have begun to question the legacy of the women suffrage movement. What is it a women's movement? Or a white women's movement? In this inquiry students examine varying documents from suffrage women. Students will pull specific evidence from each and form their own conclusion.

Below are differing documents on the legacy of women's suffrage.

1. As you read, record sentences or ideas that show the white suffragists were or were not racist in the middle columns.
2. After you finish the two middle columns, look back at the evidence. Which information is most persuasive to you? Mark that #8. Which evidence is least persuasive to you? Mark that #1.

<i>Rank</i>	Evidence white suffragists were racist	Evidence white suffragists fought for all women	<i>Rank</i>

Questions for Analysis

1. Add up the rank on each side. Which side weighed more? Why do you think it worked out that way?

2. In conclusion, were the white suffragists racist?

Background: Divided Sisters by Midge Wilson and Kathy Russel

Wilson and Russel co-wrote this book. They are professors at De Paul University with academic backgrounds in Women and Gender Studies. Wilson is white and Russel is Black.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, White and Black women, however, did return in droves to their pre-Civil War role as social reformers. And once again the majority of women's clubs were split along racial lines. While Black women sometimes preferred segregated groups because they were more comfortable in them and could more easily assume positions of leadership, it was also the case that Black women were often denied membership in White women's clubs.

The largest and best known of the social reform groups of this era was the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded in 1874. Temperance was considered a particularly appropriate cause for women because alcohol abuse was so disruptive of family life. From the beginning, WCTU policies encouraged separate Black and White unions, but at least one White woman, Amelia Bloomer, campaigned against racism within the movement, and some African American women did rise to positions of prominence within the WCTU. Frances Harper, for one, was most effective in recruiting Black women to the cause and was eventually appointed to the national office. Even so, she was plagued by issues of -race, and once commented that "some of the members of different unions have met the question in a liberal and Christian manner, others have not seemed . . . to make the distinction between Christian affiliation and social equality."

Another African American woman highly active in social reform work was Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin. Initially, she was admitted to the 1800 conference of the General Federation of Women's Clubs because her skin color was so fair that the White delegates who registered her didn't know that she was Black. When they discovered the truth, Ruffin was banned from speaking, and an attempt was made to remove her from the convention. The White Woman's Era Club then issued an official statement, saying "that colored women should confine themselves to their clubs and the large field of work open to them there."

Not all Southern White women were racist. Some worked alongside Black women in various social reform groups, and many joined in the campaign to fight against the lynchings of Black men. In 1902, the White women's societies of the Southern Methodist Church openly criticized Southern racial attitudes contributing to such lynchings, and a year later, a White woman named Jessie Daniel Ames founded the fully integrated Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. At its peak, the group had over forty thousand members.

At the turn of the century, thousands of Black women also joined in the campaign for female suffrage, which had once again gathered steam during the 1880s. Among Black women who were staunch suffragists was Anna Julia Cooper, best known for the statement: "Only the BLACK WOMAN can say when and where I enter in the quiet undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence or special patronage; then and there the whole Negro race enters with me." Cooper was particularly effective in emphasizing to Black women that they required the ballot to counter the belief that "Black men's" experiences and needs were the same as theirs. (Even today, ask anyone when Blacks first got the right to vote, and most will tell you "after the Civil War"-and in so doing, fail to acknowledge that only Black men were enfranchised at that time.)

Unfortunately, not all African American men supported female suffrage. Many believed, as did their White conservative counterparts, that women belonged in the home. The opposition of Black men did not stop Black female suffragists from speaking up about their rights, though. In a 1912 article for *The Crisis*, Mary Church Terrell wrote:

If I were a colored man, and were unfortunate enough not to grasp the absurdity of opposing suffrage because of the sex of a human being, I should at least be consistent enough to never to raise my voice against those who have disenfranchised my brothers and myself on account of race.

There also remained a significant number of Black women opposed to female suffrage. Some took that stand for no other reason than that their husbands did, and others simply distrusted anything that White women were fighting so hard to get. Even many Black women who supported the ballot recognized the expediency with which some White female suffragists treated Blacks. Antilynching crusader and journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett reacted strongly to evidence of racism, and was not afraid to call White suffragists on their often hypocritical behavior. Others were more diplomatic in their response to White women. For example, when Susan B.

Anthony attended the 1903 NWSA national convention in New Orleans, she was invited to visit the all-Black Phillis Wheatley Club. While she was there, the club president, Sylvamie ' Williams, informed Anthony that Black women were painfully aware of their inferior position among the White suffragists, but added:

When women like you, Miss Anthony, come to see us and speak to us it helps us believe in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man, and at least for the time being in the sympathy of women.

It didn't seem to matter how Black women responded; they were being ignored. As late as 1919, it was clear that a growing number of White women were ready to settle for an amendment that would give them, but not Black women, the ballot. Even Alice Paul, White president of the radical National Women's Party (NWP), whose extreme suffragists experienced picketing, imprisonment, and a hunger strike, appeared willing to write off suffrage for Black women. She is alleged to have told one audience of Southern Whites "that all of this talk of Negro women voting in South Carolina was nonsense." White men, particularly those in the South, were convinced that Black women would turn out in greater numbers to vote than White women, which would upset their White advantage at the polling place.

In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote, was finally ratified, without any reference to race. As it turned out, White women's concerns about the South hardly mattered. The amendment passed without the support of Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Florida, and Mississippi. In fact, the only Southern states to ratify it were Tennessee, Kentucky, Texas, and Arkansas.

White women could not have predicted this course of events, though. In a lingering era of lynchings and Jim Crow laws, any move to double the enfranchisement of the American population was perceived as having potentially volatile racial implications, and nowhere was this more so than in the South. For White women, the issue was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, had more of them visibly aligned themselves with Black women, the passage of the suffrage amendment most certainly

would have been delayed by racist White men threatened by the new alliance. On the other hand, had White women fully embraced Black women into their suffragist cause, there would have been more good will between them. Ironically, some historians believe that American women would have soon gained the right to vote anyhow, as most other Western nations were moving in the direction of enfranchising their female citizens. Again, though, White women didn't know this at the time, and they used "whatever means necessary" to get the suffrage amendment ratified.

When White women and Black women did vote in the first federal election, in 1920, they learned that enfranchisement had been oversold; White men remained in control of federal, state, and local governing bodies. Women of both races discovered that their influence in politics was hardly felt.

Wilson, Midge and Kathy Russel. Divided Sisters: Bridging The Gap Between Black Women and White Women. Anchor, 1996. Retrieved from <https://www.depaul.edu/~mwilson/divided/chptone.html>.

Document A: Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"

Truth was an escaped slave and consistent women's rights advocate. She gave voice to the feelings of many Black women that they were abandoned by both Black and women's groups – when the issues each addressed both had adverse effects on her.

"Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about?

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

Obliged to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothing more to say.

Truth, Sojourner. "Ain't I a Woman?" Women's Convention, Akron, Ohio. December, 1851. Retrieved from <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp>.

Document B: Susan B. Anthony in *The Revolution*

*Anthony was a founding member of NWSA and of NAWSA. She was furious at the possibility that all men would get the vote and not also all women, a concept called universal suffrage. She stated she would cut off her arm before working for Negro rights before women's rights. In 1869, Anthony defended her position in favor of woman suffrage in her suffrage newspaper *The Revolution*.*

The Revolution criticizes, 'opposes' the fifteenth amendment, not for what it is, but for what it is not. Not because it enfranchises black men, but because it does not enfranchise all women, black and white. It is not the little good it proposes, but the greater evil it perpetuates that we deprecate. It is not that in the abstract we do not rejoice that black men are to become equals of white men, but that we deplore the fact that two million (sic) black women, hitherto the political and social equals of the men by their side, are to become subjects, slaves of these men. Our protest is not that all men are lifted out of the degradation of disfranchisement, but that all women are left in. The *Revolution* and the National Women's Suffrage Association make women's suffrage their test of loyalty, not Negro suffrage, not Maine law or prohibition. Do you believe women should vote? Is the one and only question in our catechism.

Anthony, Susan B. *The Revolution*. October 7, 1869. Retrieved from Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum. <http://www.susanbanthonybirthplace.com/racism.html>.

Document C: Letter from Susan B. Anthony to Booker T. Washington

This letter was written by Anthony to Booker T. Washington, the founder of the Tuskegee Institute, who, along with his wife, Margaret Murray, educated free men and women in industrial work, among other initiatives. Anthony was a founding member of NWSA and of NAWSA.

N.Y. [City] Jan. 23, 1900

My Dear Friend: I received yours of the 16th. Certainly whenever I go to Atlanta again, it is my intention to visit Tuskegee. I am, however, hoping that my time of going will be postponed to next Autumn, when the legislatures of several of the Southern States will be in session. I think then would be a much better time for us to be in the South, and to speak perchance before every one of the legislatures, and thus send at least a representative from every district in the state, home to his constituents with a little idea of what this woman's rights movement means.

It is one of my dreams to visit Tuskegee, and to see you and Mrs. Washington and Mrs. [Adella Hunt] Logan, and all of the good men and women engaged in the splendid work of that institute. Wishing you the best of success, I am, Very sincerely yours,
Susan B. Anthony

Anthony, Susan B. "Letter from Susan Brownell Anthony to Booker T. Washington." New York City. January, 23 1900. The Booker T. Washington Papers, Library of Congress. Published in Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock, eds., The Booker T. Washington Papers. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976, 5:419. Retrieved from <http://www.nzdl.org>.

Document D: Elizabeth Cady Stanton "Manhood Suffrage"

During the debates over the 15th Amendment, Stanton published these comments in the suffrage newspaper The Revolution. Some historians have argued that she was attempting to use male logic against them. Stanton was a founding member of NWSA and later NAWSA.

"Think of Patrick and Sambo [derogatory, meaning mixed-race] and Hans and Yung Tung who do not know the difference between a Monarchy and a Republic, who never read the Declaration of Independence or Webster's spelling book, making laws for Lydia Maria Child, Lucretia Mott or Fanny Kemble. Think of jurors drawn from these ranks to try young girls for the crime of infanticide."

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. "Manhood Suffrage." *The Revolution*. Retrieved from Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum. <http://www.susanbanthonybirthplace.com/racism.html>.

Document E: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was an active abolitionist made famous in the North for her abolition speeches and open letter to John Brown. This speech comes from the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention in New York City in May of 1866.

I feel I am something of a novice upon this platform. Born of a race whose inheritance has been outrage and wrong, most of my life had been spent in battling against those wrongs. But I did not feel as keenly as others, that I had these rights, in common with other women, which are now demanded. About two years ago, I stood within the shadows of my home. A great sorrow had fallen upon my life. My husband had died suddenly, leaving me a widow, with four children, one my own, and the others stepchildren. I tried to keep my children together. But my husband died in debt; and before he had been in his grave three months, the administrator had swept the very milk-crocks and wash tubs from my hands. I was a farmer's wife and made butter for the Columbus market; but what could I do, when they had swept all away? They left me one thing-and that was a looking glass! Had I died instead of my husband, how different would have been the result! By this time he would have had another wife, it is likely; and no



administrator would have gone into his house, broken up his home, and sold his bed, and taken away his means of support...

I do not believe that giving the woman the ballot is immediately going to cure all the ills of life. I do not believe that white women are dew-drops just exhaled from the skies. I think that like men they may be divided into three classes, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. The good would vote according to their convictions and principles; the bad, as dictated by preju[d]ice or malice; and the indifferent will vote on the strongest side of the question, with the winning party.

You white women speak here of rights. I speak of wrongs. I, as a colored woman, have had in this country an education which has made me feel... against every man, and every man's hand against me. Let me go to-morrow morning and take my seat in one of your street cars-I do not know that they will do it in New York, but they will in Philadelphia-and the conductor will put up his hand and stop the car rather than let me ride... Have women nothing to do with this?...

Talk of giving women the ballot-box? Go on. It is a normal school, and the white women of this country need it. While there exists this brutal element in society which tramples upon the feeble and treads down the weak, I tell you that if there is any class of people who need to be lifted out of their airy nothings and selfishness, it is the white women of America.

Harper, Frances Ellen Watkins. "We Are All Bound Up Together". 1866. BlackPast. November 7, 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/speeches-african-american-history/1866-frances-ellen-watkins-harper-we-are-all-bound-together/>.

Document F: Ida B. Wells-Barnett

Wells-Barnett might have known about the reports of a debate among the protest organizers regarding the segregation of black marchers in Washington. She certainly knew that over the decade, NAWSA, in its strategy to gain support in the South, had appeared to capitulate to its white southern members and legislators like South Carolina Senator Ben Tillman who complained that the enfranchisement of black women would reinvigorate the resistance against white supremacy. In 1894, Ida, a guest in Susan B. Anthony's Rochester home, had debated the pioneer suffragist about keeping African-American women at bay in the name of "expediency." Ida's retort that the strategy would only "confirm white women's segregationist views" was borne out nine years later when black NAWSA members were banned from the organization's national meeting in New Orleans. Ominously, some NAWSA leaders were now assuring white Southerners that the way to sustain white supremacy was to enfranchise educated white women – raising the specter of NAWSA's willingness to pursue suffrage for white women only.

Moreover, Ida knew, such prejudice was not only found in the South. Just the year before, three leading black club women were refused admittance into the influential – if ironically named – Chicago Political Equality League (CPEL). Nine years earlier, Wells-Barnett had addressed the organization, exhorting them "to be emancipated from the prejudice which fetters their noblest endeavor and renders inconsistent their most sacred professions."

While the women were rehearsing in Washington on the eve of the march in 1913, they got word that the national organizers advised them that their contingent was to be “entirely white;” black women were to march at the tail-end of the parade. In light of the past, this moment could be a historic inflection point. If segregation were allowed to stand in a march of this national – and symbolic – significance, it would signal that women’s suffrage would be more a boon to white supremacy than black empowerment. If “women got the vote in America,” warned the *Chicago Defender*, the nation’s leading black newspaper, “the colored race will suffer further ills in legislation.” Such an idea, unchallenged, would undermine black community support, squeezing black suffragists from both ends.

With her voice trembling, a tearful Wells-Barnett told the delegation that “if they did not take a stand now in this great democratic parade then the colored women are lost.” When Grace Trout, the leader of the contingent, sided with the segregation order, Wells-Barnett, vowing to march with them or not at all, left the room.

Ida B. Wells and the Alpha Suffrage Club marching. From the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1913. When the women began marching, Ida was nowhere to be seen – but then suddenly appeared out of the crowd to “calmly” take her place with the Illinois delegation. Two white suffragists, Belle Squire and Virginia Brooks, took positions on each side of her. Wells-Barnett “proudly marched with the ... head Ladies of the Illinois delegation showing that no Color line existed in ... the first national parade of the noble women who are in favor of equal suffrage ...” remarked the *Chicago Broad Ax*, another black paper.



Indeed, black women at large were reported to have ignored the segregation order and marched with their respective delegations. The *Broad Ax* gave special commendation to black Howard University student members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, led by Mary Church Terrell, another leading black suffragist, who marched in the Education Section of the parade.

Giddings, Paula J. “A Noble Endeavor: Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Suffrage.” *National Parks Service*. Last modified April 1, 2020. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/a-noble-endeavor-ida-b-wells-barnett-and-suffrage.htm>

Document G: Kate Gordon Letter to Roberta Wellford

Gordon was a leading member of NAWSA and head of the Southern Suffrage Association. She advocated for educated suffrage, but also white-women’s suffrage as a means for promoting white supremacy over Black men. This is a letter she wrote in 1916.

January 11, 1916.
Miss Roberta Wellford,
University of Va., P.O., Virginia.

My dear Miss Wellford:

...if woman suffrage is kept as a state right, you will see that the negro women will not get any special national protection such as they can get, with a mandate forbidding disfranchisement on account of sex. In reality every prohibition against the negro man's voting could be applied to the women, but in the states where their numbers make them a menace the subterfuges that are employed are really illegal, and the mass of the men who are determined to preserve white supremacy are willing, if it is necessary, to club negro men away from the polls, but you will understand a sympathy with them when they do not wish to be forced to club negro women, and the women hearing this are far more belligerent!

I feel that if the franchise comes to the women of the south through the state and that we can continue the present restrictions there will be no trouble for the negro women, but if by any chance the national amendment does carry I think there will be trouble for them, and much of the good that we women want to see come from suffrage will be defeated by entangling it with this race prejudice. That is why I think out southern women endorsing a national amendment are making a serious mistake.

I do not know much about the publication of the CRISIS. It stands for negro uplift, but so far as I can make out that negro uplift is an effort in behalf of negro equality. We take the CRISIS simply to be in touch and prepare to answer southern editors, and frequently we have written letters to editors and I believe with good results. If you would like to see some of these copies of the paper I will be glad to send them to you. This summer they had a "Votes for Women" edition with Abraham Lincoln and Sojourner Truth as the frontispiece, and it makes the prejudiced southerners not over zealous for woman suffrage at their best, foam at the mouth.

We are commencing to get comments on Mrs. Patty Jacobs' statistics in her Congressional speech. I wish to the Lord the woman suffragists would try to fight shy of the race question instead of courting it by national endorsement. Of course, her enthusiastic support is the aftermath of the Shafroth amendment activity. Just think of the fatal work that fool thing has accomplished and the opportunity and time wasted, not to mention the money spent in its advocacy.

I hope that you are studying out with care the United States Elections Bill. A copy of it appears in the January issue of the NEW SOUTHERN CITIZEN. If the Democratic Party is awake to its opportunity it will pass it and spike the Republicans' chance for doing so, when they get in power, which very probably they will in the next administration.

Very cordially,
Kate M. Gordon