

Alice Paul:
The Fight for Women's Equality

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Alice Paul

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Research Paper

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"I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality"

-Alice Paul

Alice Paul was an astonishing American suffragist, feminist, and a women's rights activist. All throughout the 1900's women were treated like "dogs". Women would get paid less than men, as Nicholson described "...mothers told their children to be quiet in public, girls were told to stay in their place and, mostly, do not make a spectacle of yourself. Wives, mothers, sisters; all women were held hostage in highly defined roles, they were expected to dress proper in attire which always included a hat and restricted social participation. There was lots of backbreaking work but somehow women were still thought to be frail and expected to be docile..." (Nicholson). However, Alice Paul was one of the thousand women who helped transform society today. It all started on January, 11, 1885, in Mount Laurel Township, New Jersey where Paul first became part of the patriarchal world. Paul was born into a family who highly supported gender equality. Paul's mother, Tacie Paul, was even part of the National American Women's Suffrage Association. At a young age, Paul was first introduced to the suffrage movement when her mother often took her to women's suffrage meetings. They would also frequently held meetings in their residence. All of her life, she fought for the equality of sexes. Alice Paul was a tough, inimitable women's rights activist because she helped develop the 19th Amendment (which gave women the right to vote) and the Equal Rights Amendment, although she died by the time it was officially considered an amendment but, she still helped and supported getting the amendment passed by all the required states. Paul encountered many difficulties, and she also explored different

feminist organizations to meet new people, helping women get what they rightfully deserved. Paul also exchanged many ideas to convince the people that women are just as equal, as men are. Paul was not like other women feminists, she was unique and wild. She was a leader and she was on top of everything. She came up with good ideas and was very good at getting noticed by the public.

According to Reiter “Paul finished high school in 1901 with top of her senior class. She soon graduated from Swarthmore college in 1905, getting an internship in social work and later earning a Ph.D in biology in 1907 from the University of Pennsylvania. Later that year, Paul left to Birmingham, England to study social work at various British universities” (Reiter). While in England, Paul first became politically active when she met the Pankhurst women, some of the most violent suffragettes who approved “direct and visible measures, such as heckling, window smashing, and rock throwing, to raise public awareness about the suffrage issue” (Reiter). Alice Paul exchanged ideas with the suffragettes and began doing the same impassioned actions as they did. She eventually joined their movement and admitted to “personally breaking more than forty-eight windows and being arrested and imprisoned on several occasions” (Reiter).

On March 3, 1913, Paul put together a huge parade of women in Washington, D.C., hoping to get the nation’s and President Woodrow Wilson’s attention. The parade Paul put together was really Paul’s first big push into getting the public’s attention toward the movement. As Nicholson said “This event would change the suffrage identity from state to state battles to a national movement” (Nicholson). She mostly organized the parade to coincide with the day before President Wilson’s new term in the office.

Over eight-thousand women marched up Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House with banners and floats. More than half the people that were there in town supported Wilson for his inauguration. President Wilson didn't get to experience the march as he came by train in order to reduce the amount of people who were there to greet him. Some of the bystanders started to mock and make fun of the suffragists with verbal insults. It got to the point where the insults were no longer verbal; the situation escalated quickly into physical violence against the marchers. The police just watched and did not help the suffragists. Paul encountered the difficulties of doing such a risky thing putting all the women and men who marched with her that day in great danger. "When order was eventually restored, Paul's strategy had worked. The newspapers covered the event extensively, and suffrage had captured the nation's attention" (Shetterly). The march was highly publicized because many police officers didn't do anything to stop the riot, several people were angry, the Washington, D.C. superintendent of police lost his job. On March 17, Paul and other suffragists met with the President and told him about their issue. He told them that it wasn't a good time for an amendment. They met with President Wilson two more times in the same month still making no progress. As Paul stated to President Wilson "Mr. President how long must women wait to get their liberty? Let us have the rights we deserve." (Paul)

Alice Paul encountered many obstacles, one being she spent several terms in jail. Paul has been caught up with the law a total of ten times. Starting in January 1917, Paul and other women picketed the White house for up to eighteen months, they were also the first people to picket the White house. As described in an article on the National Women's History Museum website "over 1,000 "Silent Sentinels" slowly marched, day

and night, in front of the White House gates, displaying suffrage banners with messages such as, "Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?" They endured the verbal and physical attacks of spectators which only increased after the United States entered World War I and the women's signs became more accusatory, asking President Wilson how he could send American men to die in a war for democracy when he denied women the right to vote at home." Many women also encountered challenges as did Paul when they were jailed for blocking roads, and causing traffic jams. The more women would picket the White House, the longer the time their sentences in jail would be. As Paul said "It even became fashionable to picket for suffrage and then serve time in jail" (Brown).

Later, returning home to America in 1912, after joining the movement with the Pankhurst Women in England the first feminist activist association Paul explored into the American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). She ended up co-founding a group called the Congressional Union with Lucy Burns, who was another rights activist. They also founded the National Women's Party (NWP) and the National Equal Suffrage Campaign. Anne Martin, a young woman who also had experience with the British suffrage movement, and then the Nevada Equal Suffrage Campaign was to be the head of this party. The Congressional Union later, came together with the National Women's party. Paul explored several women's rights organizations but was mostly known for being part of the National Women's party.

In the depths of being on a hunger strike, Paul and her companions were arrested for picketing the White House. Paul was given seven months in jail. Paul exchanged ideas with the women in jail to come up with an plan to get what they

wanted, to be treated like political criminals. According to the Alice Paul Institute “their demands were met with brutality as suffragists, including frail, older women, were beaten, pushed and thrown into cold, unsanitary, and rat-infested cells”. The women then went on a hunger strike; “food simply isn't important to me”, Paul said as she refused to eat the food the jail offered, and threatened to starve to death unless she and her six companions were given better food. Because of her refusal to eat, the jail threatened her to put Paul in an insane asylum, but Paul and her partners were rather forcefully fed in a tortuous method.

In 1917, after a public outcry of the prison's abuse towards Paul and the suffragists in jail, “...President Wilson reversed his position and announced his support for a suffrage amendment, calling it a “war measure” (Carol, et., Al.). The 19th Amendment was finally endorsed in 1920 after all the troubles Paul and other women encountered in order to receive justice.

”While many suffragist's left the public life of activism after the 19th Amendment was enacted, Alice Paul believed the true battle for equality had yet to be won” (Carol, et., Al.). This meant that although everyone seemed satisfied after getting the 19th amendment, most people felt that they did as much as they could to get what they deserved. Most of them went back to living their normal lives, what they did before getting politically active. However Paul, didn't feel satisfied, she knew that there was more yet to be done. Paul wanted to explore better, bigger ideas, so she set her standards higher; to get the equal rights amendment enforced. “This amendment called for absolute equality stating, “Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction” (Carol, et., Al.). The Equal

Rights Amendment was introduced to Congress in every session they had from 1923 until it was officially passed in 1972 and sent for ratification. According to the Alice Paul Institute the amendment read “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.” Unfortunately, only thirty-five, out of the needed thirty-eight signed the amendment by its deadline. Sadly Paul died during the campaign of ratification in 1977. The campaign of ratification was mostly led by the National Organization for Women (NOW)..

As in an article by Jo Freeman all about the memorial march for Alice Paul “Soon thereafter Elizabeth Chittick, the current National Women’s Party President, decided that the 1977 celebration of Suffrage Day should honor the Parties (NWP) founder. She asked National Organization of Women and other women's organization to join their party in a march up Pennsylvania Avenue. The Nation Women’s Party also invited several original suffragists to march with them” (Freeman). They wanted to recreate the suffrage parade that took place in Washington, D.C. in 1913. The National Women’s party asked that women who participated to wear white but some women wore purple, white, and gold. “The NPW explained that purple stood for the "Royal Glory of Womanhood"; white for "Purity in the Home and in Politics"; and gold for the "Crown of Victory". Some people carried original Suffrage banners; some carried new ones made for this march which identified their organizations and/or support for the Equal Rights Amendment” (Freeman). However, this march had a better ending then it did in 1913. Instead of the police overlooking the mob, the police escorted the parade with a motorcycle. President Jimmy Carter, who was already known for supporting the Equal Rights Amendment, “...met with leaders of eighty women's groups where he passed out

pens used to sign a proclamation designating August 26 as Women's Equality Day" (Freeman). Even though not everybody agreed with the new amendments and the memorial march for Alice Paul but they were more self-controlled unlike, the historic parade that took place in 1913.

The legend's last day of walking of the Earth was July, 9th, 1977. "Her life demonstrates that one person can make a difference. Her legacy lives on, bearing witness to the significance of her life and inspiring others who struggle for social justice." (Carol, et., Al.) Alice Paul had a well respected life as she fought audaciously and meticulously to be equal. She encountered several tough obstacles such as being in and out of jail numerous times and going on hunger strikes to being brutally beaten. She also explored different types of people such as the Pankhurst women, Lucy Burns and many other women. Paul also explored different associations, as she also founded some as well. Paul exchanged many magnificent ideas and thoughts. It is very rare that a person dedicates their entire life to a single cause in which they believe but that's exactly what Paul did. Thanks to Alice Paul and everyone who participated in the women suffrage movement for helping women today to be just as independent and powerful as men are. Although, women still have a lot more work needed to do. Sexism is everywhere around the world then and now. "There will never be a new world order until women are a part of it" (Paul). Paul's legacy will forever live on in the history of equality. Paul did so much to help the women in America become more powerful. Many people are inspired by feminist such as Paul. Alice Paul was a remarkable, courageous woman.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Brown, Deborah. *Alice Paul raises a glass in front of a banner*. Learn NC. Web. 30 Nov. 2015. <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/media/uploads/2009/12/alice_paul.jpg>.

This photograph helped me understand how Alice Paul looked. Her expression didn't seem very happy, and she seems proud, but very tired.

Crowds at 15th & Penna. Ave. before the Suffragette Parade, March 3, 1913. 1913.

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Web. 13 Nov. 2015. <<http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a38300/>>.

This source helped me by seeing an actual view of the women suffrage parade. In the photo there are many crowds of people at the parade.

Fry, Amelia R. "Alice Paul." *S.F Sunday Examiner & Chronicle* 10 June 1977. Web. 18 Nov. 2015. <http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt6f59n89c&doc.view=entire_text>.

This source helped a lot because I can see how Alice talked and how she felt. I really like to read interviews because they are more personal than someone who just wrote about another life.

"Miss Alice Paul on Hunger Strike." *New York Times*, 7 Nov. 1917. Web. 2 Dec. 2015. <<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?>

This source helped because I could not find a primary source about when Alice went on a hunger strike. This source also had many quotes on her thoughts about what happened to her and her companions.

Reiter, Anna. *Fearless Radicalism: Alice Paul and Her Fight for Women's Suffrage*.

Armstrong Undergraduate Journal of History 3, Nov. 2013. Web. 19 Nov. 2015.

<http://archive.armstrong.edu/Initiatives/history_journal/history_journal_fearless_radicalism_alice_paul_and_her_fight_for_womens_suf>.

This source helped a lot because its citations at the bottom of the page helped me with easily finding the information they used in their research. I like pages with easy navigation; especially in this case, they had links to everything, which was extremely beneficial.

"Woman's journal and suffrage news" with the headline: "Parade struggles to victory despite disgraceful scenes" showing images of the women's suffrage parade in Washington, March 3,. 1913. Library of Congress Rare Book and Special Collections Division. Web. 13 Nov. 2015. <<http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.02970/>>.

This source helped because I got to see a peek of one of the newspaper articles about the Women Suffrage. Seeing older newspapers is very interesting because I can see what the people received on average day, back then.

Secondary Sources:

Abbott, Shirley. *Alice Paul and the Women's Suffrage Movement*. N.p., 1981. Web. 19 Nov. 2015. <<http://historywired.si.edu/detail.cfm?ID=492>>.

What I liked most about this source is that it gives information about why Alice Paul

went to jail the time she did. The article also told how many women went to jail for the same reasons in their fight for freedom.

Barber, Susan E. *One Hundred Years toward Suffrage: An Overview*. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Nov. 2015. <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/naw/nawstime.html>>.

This source helped a lot because it had a full timeline of the National American Suffrage Association, which Paul was a part of. I think timelines are very helpful and I can easily read them as the numbers are very clear.

Brown, Deborah. *The long struggle for women's suffrage*. U.S. Department of State., n.d. Web. 1 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newcentury/5743>>

This source helped because it told about the event of the Women Suffrage in general. It had information about each leader who helped influence.

Buchheit, Paul. "The Many Ways Women Are Still Mistreated in a Patriarchal US Society." Buzzflash. 5 Oct. 2015. Web. 29 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.truth-out.org/buzzflash/commentary/the-many-ways-women-are-still-mistreated-in-a-patriarchal-us-society>>.

Although I didn't necessarily take any of this information from this article to my research it helped me see the difference of men and women. "Women continue to be mistreated in a society dominated by a patriarchal structure."

Carol, Rebecca, Kristina Myers, and Janet Lindman. *Who was Alice Paul?: Alice Paul: Feminist, Suffragist, and Political Strategist*. Ed. Rebecca Carol, Kristina Myers, and Janet Lindman. Alice Paul Institute, 2014. Web. 20 Nov. 2015.

<<http://www.alicepaul.org/who-was-alice-paul/>>.

This source helped a lot because it had a very easy, yet clear to access different

links. The webpage was simple to move around and had basic information about Alice Paul.

Freeman, Jo. "The Alice Paul Memorial March, Washington, D.C. 1977." The Alice Paul Memorial March, Washington, D.C. 1977. Web. 28 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.uic.edu/orgs/cwluherstory/jofreeman/photos/AlicePaul1977.html>>.

This article had a very brief description of Alice Paul's life. Although the article was short and simple, it helped me get a "base" of information.

People Alice Paul 1885-1977. PBS, 2001. Web. 19 Nov. 2015. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/wilson/peopleevents/p_paul.html>.

This source was helpful because like many other sites this one also provided pictures of Alice Paul. This source was also helped because it got straight to the point and was fairly easy to comprehend.

Harvey, Sheridan. *Marching For The Vote: Remembering The Woman Suffrage Parade Of 1913*. N.p., 2015. Web. 13 Nov. 2015. <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/aw01e/aw01e.html>>.

This source helped me because on the website it had many different primary sources I used such as photos, drawings, and newspaper articles. I love websites where I can find both primary and secondary sources.

Lee, Michelle. *What Effect Did Women's Suffrage Have on the Politics of the 1920s?*. synonym, n.d. Web. 18 Nov. 2015. <<http://classroom.synonym.com/effect-did-womens-suffrage-politics-1920s-10875.html>>.

This source helped me a lot because it had a primary source located inside of the website. Also, on the website were links to other related topic which were very

helpful for me to continue in my research.

"National Women's History Museum." Education & Resources. Web. 1 Feb. 2016.

<<https://www.nwhm.org/education-resources/biography/biographies/alice-paul/>>.

This article was very useful as they went into depth on the Women Suffrage parade and Alice Paul's hunger strike. However, I did not like that in this article no author was found.

Nicholson, Zoe. "Chapter 3 Make A Spectacle of Yourself." *'Miss Alice Paul'* 2016. Web.

29 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.missalicepaul.com/2014/12/make-a-spectacle.html>>.

This site helped me understand how different the world was in the early 1900s. It made me realize how women were mistreated. However, most of the site was based off of the 1913 Violet March Alice Paul put together.

Taylor, Alan. "100 Years Ago, The 1913 Women's Suffrage Parade." The Atlantic.

Atlantic Media Company, 1 Mar. 2013. Web. 26 Jan. 2016. <[http://](http://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2013/03/100-years-ago-the-1913-womens-suffrage-parade/100465/)

www.theatlantic.com/photo/2013/03/100-years-ago-the-1913-womens-suffrage-parade/100465/>.

In this article, Taylor spoke mostly about the massive parade in 1913. The photos which matched all descriptions of the march, really helped me imagine the parade better.