

Washington, D.C.

While there were few local suffrage organizations in Washington, D.C., its status as the nation's capital meant that women from across the country gathered in D.C. to march in parades, picket, and hold meetings.

1913—Organized by the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) Congressional Committee leaders Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, the suffrage parade marched down Pennsylvania Avenue. The parade took the same path as Woodrow Wilson's Inaugural Parade the next day. Roughly 5,000 women participated in the suffrage parade, led by New York City labor lawyer, Inez Milholland, who rode a white horse.

Uniting local Black suffrage groups, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) advocated for fundamental civil rights for Black Americans, including anti-lynching and anti-segregation efforts, under the leadership of its first president, Mary Church Terrell. Terrell, an active member of NAWSA, led NACW to endorse suffrage in 1912, even though Black women were largely excluded from the movement.

In 1913, Terrell and Ida B. Wells, a fellow member of NACW and prominent suffragist, participated in NAWSA's 1913 suffrage parade. Following the 19th Amendment's passage, NACW continued to advocate for the suffrage rights of Black women, as many Southern states continued to block Black women from voting. In 1928, NACW opened its first headquarters in Washington, D.C., at 1114 O Street NW.

1916—The Congressional Committee (which became the National Woman's Party (NWP) in 1916) pushed the boundaries of more traditional suffrage groups. From 1914 to 1922, suffrage leaders rented several headquarters near the White House, including Cameron House and 14 Jackson Place. These locations proved helpful as the suffragists centered their campaign in the corridors of the D.C. power structure—the White House and Congress.

1929—The NWP moved into its new headquarters, the Belmont House at 144 Constitution Avenue NE, after Alva Belmont, a wealthy suffragist, bought the property. Today, the headquarters is known as the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, having been renamed to honor the legacy of Alice Paul.

*D.C. residents were not able to vote for President and Vice President until after the 23rd Amendment's passage in 1961. D.C. residents gained the ability to vote for a mayor and city council in 1974.

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