

# How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement

Award-winning historian Cathleen D. Cahill, author of *Recasting the Vote: How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement*, in conversation with Virginia Scharff, the Autry's Senior Scholar and Distinguished Professor Emerita, University of New Mexico.

*These video clips require a general knowledge of women's suffrage and the 19th Amendment. Please see the Autry lesson: Women's Suffrage in the West.*

## THE BLACK SUFFRAGIST EXPERIENCE

**Task:** As you watch the video clip, listen for the answers to the questions below. Write your response in the space provided. Use the list of women of color suffragists to help you.

*Guiding Question: "Why don't the Black women who've been so active in the movement – Martha Jones writes about it in her book Vanguard - why are they not getting an invitation [by Alice Paul to speak at an event in answer to "what next?"] but this Native woman activist does?"*

1. What does Cahill say about why black women suffragists are treated differently than other women of color?

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2. What did Cahill mean that non-Black women of color were romanticized?

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3. Why else were Black women suffragists not "invited" to some of the events in the larger suffrage movement?

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### WOMEN OF COLOR SUFFRAGISTS

**Maria Adelina "Nina" Otera-Warren**  
*Hispano (Spanish/Mexican)*

**Marie Louise Bottineau Baldwin**  
*Turtle Mountain Chippewa and French North Dakotan*

**Mabel Ping Hua-Lee**  
*Chinese*

**Laura Cornelius Kellog**  
*Wisconsin Oneida*

**Gertrude Simmons Bonnin**  
**(used the penname Zitkala-Sa)**  
*Yangton Dakota Sioux*

**Carrie Williams Clifford**  
*African American*

## Vocabulary

Pervasive: widespread; everywhere

Leverage: use something to one's advantage

Capitulate: surrender; give in

# Key Events in Relation to Suffrage in the United States

1850

**1870 – 15th Amendment:** Voting for United States citizens cannot be denied on the basis of race. Native Americans were not U.S. citizens, they were considered wards of the state so they could not vote.

**1875 – Jim Crow Laws:** State laws to limit voting for Black, Chinese and other races of men born in the U.S. by requiring a tax, property, or literacy test to vote.

1900

**1882 – Chinese Exclusion Act:** Chinese immigrants denied U.S. citizenship; Chinese immigrants cannot vote.

**1920 – 19th Amendment:** Voting cannot be denied on the basis of gender. Women can vote.

**1924 – Native American Citizenship Act:** Native Americans are U.S. citizens and can vote.

1950

**1943 – Magnuson Act:** Chinese immigrants can become naturalized U.S. citizens; at naturalization they can vote.

**1957 – Civil Rights Act Revision:** Federal government has oversight of voter registration and the authority to call upon courts for injunctions (orders to stop something) to protect voters and their rights.

**1964 – 24th Amendment:** Eliminates poll tax for voting (a tax in order to vote despite income level).

**1964 – Civil Rights Act:** Bans discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (gender), and national origin (place of birth).

**1965 – Voting Rights Act:** Bans voter discrimination based on race, color, or membership in a language minority group. Literacy tests are illegal; a “preclearance” from the federal government for any new voting practices or procedures in states is required.

2000

**1967 – Civil Rights Act Revision:** Federal government has authority to inspect voter registration in states; there are criminal penalties for obstructing people from voting.

**2013 – Shelby v. Holder:** United States Supreme Court ruling that the “preclearance” required by the 1965 Voting Rights Act for state districts to submit changes to voting laws to the government was unconstitutional. Oversight on district and state voting laws by the federal government is limited.

2050