LISA TETRAULT INTERVIEW
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LISA TETRAULT
Historian and Author
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Interviewed by Katie Davison
Total Running Time: 1 hour, 16 minutes

START TC: 01:00:00:00

Personal Background

01:00:09:12

LISA TETRAULT:

My name is Lisa Tetrault and I'm a professor of history. I focus on U.S. women, gender, social movements and democracy and the vote, and memory as well.

LISA TETRAULT:

Studying abroad as a French major in college, and the world around me and when I was in France, not being familiar, and history, making it familiar, and then I started to realize that history was not about dead facts in the past. It was a living narrative in the present, and I got hooked.

LISA TETRAULT:

The myth of Seneca Falls was inspired by my interest in how history functions in the present, and how we're always making and remaking history in the present.

History as constructed narratives

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LISA TETRAULT:

Seneca Falls was a constructed narrative. I didn't know that when I started, nor did I intend to research that question when I started. It evolved out of the research process.

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LISA TETRAULT:

We often, I think, when we think of the past think that it's just a bunch of transparent facts that fit together and obvious narratives that are handed down to us from people before. But in fact, we in the present pick facts out of the past and make stories out of them. And so, historical stories are always very much about the past, but also about the present and the people who make those stories. So what I want to focus on is how history is a constructed narrative, about how it's a political narrative. It's not just a transparent neutral description of what happened in the past. It is an argument, and every historical narrative is an argument. And every time we lay down a historical narrative, we're laying down an argument in the present

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LISA TETRAULT:

We have national narratives that try to impose one version of the past on us and try to inculcate us into one version of what it means to be an American. And then we have all kinds of competing narratives that social movements, disenfranchised people build up and offer in exchange. You know, we had a past that mattered as well. And your version of the past is not accurate. Therefore your version of white supremacy is not accurate.

White men as the authors of history

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LISA TETRAULT:

One of the things that shored up a white male nation that we've had for the bulk of our nation in this country was a historical narrative that was made by and told about white men. And so, women's history wasn't part of that story because it wasn't part of a political impulse in the present. And one of the things that social movements have done is insist upon the fact that they have a past, and that's part of how they legitimate themselves in the present. So the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement, and a variety of other movements insisted on both creating a women's history narrative, a black history narrative, a queer history narrative, and inserting that into the white male narrative, and challenging that white male narrative. So, in many ways it's because the political power in this country has been held by white men. They're the ones who've told the story.

History's role in social movements

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LISA TETRAULT:

We think of history as about the past, but it's really about the present, because we tell stories about the past and the present to make sense of who we are in the present, and what our priorities should be, and what other people's priorities should be, who matters, who therefore deserves to have power, who ought to be getting more power, who's been overlooked, people who are in the silences. All of that is about the present. It's not really about the past. What facts from the past we choose to highlight says something about who we are. And so social movements have always, although it's a very under-recognized piece of social activism, told stories about the past, both to argue that their political demands have merit and have weight and have legitimacy. And also to try to define what the movement is and why it exists, to try to persuade activists within that movement why they ought to adhere to the movement, why they ought to fight for its causes. And that's almost always, if you look at what social activism says, it's a story about the past, which is an argument about the present.

Narrative of Suffrage: Seneca Falls to the 19th Amendment

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LISA TETRAULT:

One of the things that happens though is that even the narrative social movements tell are not necessarily accurate. They're meant to score political points, and so, the Women's Suffrage Movement, for example, starts to create a narrative about itself, about halfway through the movement that says it

began in 1848 at Seneca Falls and it ends in 1920, with the passage of the 19th amendment. That is not accurate, but it was politically useful for the women of the time to tell the story that way. That story really highlights sort of, white well to do women or white middling women to well to do women. And that story works for their ambitions, but it doesn't work for the ambitions of lots of other women.

Narratives of the Suffrage Movement

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LISA TETRAULT:

Sometimes we date women's suffrage from 1848 to 1920 but that 1848 to 1920 timeline handicaps us in so many ways because it fails to allow us to connect that story to all the other voting rights challenges and all the other voting rights stories of the United States' history. If we start bringing in the date of 1965 for example, or when Native Americans gets citizenship in 1947, or when Asian-Americans start qualifying for citizenship in 1950s. When we add those stories to the suffrage narrative, the suffrage narrative looks very different and 1920 is just one development among a lot. It's not an end point anymore. But what happens is all those dates belong to other stories, and we forget that they also belong to the woman's suffrage story. And we forget that 1920 belongs to the civil rights story because that took sex out of the constitution and allowed black women and Latino women and Asian women to vote. So in some ways we have artificially segregated stories by interest group when many times those stories belong together. And if we could start

to put some of those stories together, I think we would have a much richer story of women's suffrage.

Fractures within social movements

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LISA TETRAULT:

One of the ways in which social narratives or movement narratives operate with inside the movement also is to try to make them look more cohesive and more united than they often actually are. Because a cohesive, united movement makes a stronger argument for change and for demand than a fractured divisive in-fighting narrative. So social movements themselves end up creating narratives about themselves where they're united and unified, but in fact, usually almost always social movements are fractured and divided and argumentative and ugly at times. But that doesn't make a very strong case for their demands. So it works better, in many cases, to make social movements appear as if they're unified and coherent.

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LISA TETRAULT:

We often romanticize social movements as perfect in some ways, as idyllic, as utopian, and they are just as fractured because they're political movements, as all kinds of politics. There are messy struggles. They don't unfold neatly and they don't accomplish their goals neatly.

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LISA TETRAULT:

Yeah, the suffrage movement is such a complicated movement and I find it fascinating for just that reason, because it is revered by a large segment of the population and it is maligned by an equally large segment of the population. So how do we make sense of those dual approaches to this particular movement? And part of it is by paying attention to the complexity of movements that we often miss when we recover movements. And much in the same way that white men often told the history of a nation as a kind of story of triumphal progress that brought everybody along and social activists would argue, no, we didn't get brought along in that social progress, you know, you've left us out. The same things happened within the women's suffrage movement. The white women narrate it as, this is a story of progress. We began our fight in 1848, we won our goal in 1920, and with that is a story of a kind of progress, both of white women and of American democracy as a whole. There are lots of other people who know that is not a story of progress. That is a story of us being left out. And much like white men who ruled this nation for a long time, a lot of white women in the movement leave out and forget and silence and ignore a lot of the other women who were left out of that narrative of progress.

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LISA TETRAULT:

And the racism within the movement, much like the racism within the United States, was endemic and was ubiquitous. It was everywhere within the movement. And so, people who got left out of that story and who got left out of that tide, millions and millions and millions of women, look back on that and the people with whom they're aligned, and other social movements look back on that suffrage movement and see a movement that was very narrowly

focused on the rights of a few, and willing to play a politics of white supremacy and throw women of color under the bus and throw men of color under the bus. And so they malign the movement. So what we get is this, if we tell the story from white suffragists' points of view, it seems like a very triumphal happy narrative. If we tell it from the point of view of the people who got left out, it looks like a movement that was highly exclusionary and, in many cases, reinforcing a politics of white supremacy rather than challenging it.

Rise of the Women's Movement

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LISA TETRAULT:

The women's movement out of which the suffrage movement arises really starts in the antebellum period in the United States. So when the 1830s, 1840s and in that era there were lots and lots of social movements in the United States. Social movements aren't something that are an invention of the 20th century. Those social movements challenged all kinds of things and one of them challenged slavery, that was abolition, or anti-slavery. Within that were a lot of women, but at the time, in the 19th century, women were not supposed to be in the public. They were supposed to remain in the home. And so if you were a woman in public, you were automatically rejecting and violating gender codes. So a lot of these women who felt compelled in their moral souls to go out and testify against slavery, the Grimke sisters, Lucretia Mott, Abby Kelley and lots of black abolitionists, they began testifying against slavery and found themselves unwittingly attacked as women in public. And

then they began to defend themselves as women, something they didn't necessarily set out to do in the beginning. So in some ways the women's movement or a women's movement arises out of abolition as a kind of unintentional consequence in a way. Because the women in that movement find themselves needing to defend themselves as women—their right to speak in public, their right to speak a political mind, their right to argue a political argument, their right to be persuasive and assertive as opposed to passive and obedient. So, a lot of these women find themselves suddenly asserting those rights along with the emancipation and the ending of slavery in the United States. And so what you get is this women's rights movement that arises out of abolition, out of anti-slavery, that has all kinds of overlaps and cross memberships and similar and different political goals. But the two really arise very close and very tightly woven together. Women start demanding all kinds of things in that time period then.

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LISA TETRAULT:

They demand the right to speak in public. They demand equal wages. They demand the right to own property. At this point, women who are married cannot own any property and most women were married. So, for example, if you sold some eggs at a market and got 50 cents... Well, that would have been a lot more money at the time than you would've gotten. If you'd sold some eggs at a market and you got a penny, that would belong to your husband. So you had no financial independence of your own and no financial foundation on which to build a life. You were entirely dependent. Women start demanding access to education, co-education with men. They start demanding access to the professions, to be able to become doctors, ministers,

lawyers. They demand all kinds of things. They demand an end to the sexual double standard, whereby men could have a life of exploration, whereby women were condemned for such a thing. They start demanding a whole variety of things. And one of the things they demand also is the right to vote, but it's really one demand among many in the 1840s, 1850s. It doesn't become the center of the movement until the post-Civil War era.

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LISA TETRAULT:

What's interesting about that agenda, however, is that it really suits the lives of white married women. It does not suit the lives of immigrant women working in factories. It does not suit the lives of free black women who are suffering under racism in the North. It does not fit the lives of enslaved women. So, it's an important agenda and all of those gains will be important gains for all women, but they're not equally enjoyed by all women.

Reconstruction Amendments

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LISA TETRAULT:

All of that social ferment that builds over the 1840s and the 1850s culminates in a massive victory during the American Civil War, which is emancipation. And the impossibility of uprooting and eradicating something that deeply rooted in the American fabric gives people hope and confidence that they can uproot all kinds of evils. And of course, what various Americans identify as the most important evil that they need to uproot varies tremendously. But there's this moment of just incredible optimism, that not

only can we uproot the evils, but we can remake the society into something new, something egalitarian.

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LISA TETRAULT:

Now of course, there were a thousand visions of what that egalitarianism ought to look like, but you start to have this incredible social ferment of all those people pressing those agendas, thinking we can actually do this now. And also the remaking, really the fundamental remaking of a nation going on, because slavery is eradicated. And part of the question now is then, what laws govern the lives of freed people? Are those... Are they brought into citizenship? Are they part of the same judicial and legal code as white Americans, as native born Americans, are they not? So there's this incredible remaking and this incredible optimism that now is a moment where real substantive transformation as possible. And part of what evolves out of that is Congress's vision for what this new egalitarian nation ought to look like. And part of what Congress does is propose these Reconstruction amendments. They start amending the Constitution. And their vision is we should have an amendment that ends slavery. So that's the 13th Amendment. Then, they move through a variety of political upheavals, and decide what we need to do is give citizenship to freed people, which was by no means assured, that freed people would be considered citizens of the nation. The 14th Amendment grants citizenship and also says, you can't deprive people of their rights without due process of law, and that citizens should have equal protection under the laws.

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LISA TETRAULT:

That amendment will go on to be highly important. And then Congress, a year later, proposes the 15th amendment, which says essentially that you can't deprive voting on the basis of race. And so it enfranchises black men effectively. And the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments are considered the Reconstruction amendments, and they are highly influential and highly transformative. And a lot of people call this the second founding. In other words, we had the original founding with the Constitution and then we had this rebirth of a nation, this new kind of strong Federalist federal state.

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LISA TETRAULT:

What's also important about the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments is that each of them, Congress gives itself the power to enforce them. And Congress really didn't enforce rights of citizenship. That was something in the antebellum period, the 40s and the 50s, and 20s... 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s that was enforced by the States, both defined by the States and enforced by the States. So one of the other things that happens during reconstruction is you start to get the insertion of the federal government into both defining and defending American citizens rights. And a lot of these social movements will say, "Hey, we're going to start demanding that the federal government protect us as opposed to our States." And that's a whole shift, too, in American social movements, to start to look to the federal government as a protector and an enactor of those rights.

Split in Suffrage Movement over 15th Amendment

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LISA TETRAULT:

As different people think we can make our vision of justice a reality start fighting with one another over those different visions of justice, you start to get all kinds of ugly cleavages in the United States and ugly splits and ugly fights. And one of them that is unbelievably painful is one that happens in the feminist-abolitionist coalition, those people who had been organized in women's rights and anti-slavery, prior to the American civil war. They found a new organization after the American civil war and they decide what we're going to press for is voting rights for freed people, all freed people, black men and black women and white women, and so they start pressing for those demands. They're like, this is what we think is the most important demand for remaking a nation. When Congress proposes the 15th amendment, and only gives voting to black men or only extends voting to black men, there's a huge fight within the feminist abolitionist coalition because it's half of what they're demanding. So do they approach it as a glass half full or is this too short of their ultimate goal and therefore ought to be rejected as too much of a compromise with principal? And so an enormous fight breaks open between some very famous figures. Elizabeth Katie Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglas, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, a variety of titans within the feminist abolitionists movement, Lucretia Mott. And Stanton and Anthony really are the ones who opened the fight by saying we refuse to support the 15th amendment because this is enfranchising black men before white women.

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LISA TETRAULT:

And a lot of people want to defend that as a principled stand. You know, what we demand is all things for all people, not just half of our demands. But really it's not that. What it is—is Stanton and Anthony standing up and saying, and revealing their own sense of a pretty entrenched racial hierarchy, in saying we don't want ignorant black sambos, which is language they use. Ignorant black men, sambos, voting before the educated white womanhood of the nation, which of course they're seeing in a kind of elevated fashion. So, it's not this kind of egalitarianism that you might hope for. And Stanton and Anthony get into a huge fight with Frederick Douglas and Frederick Douglas says back, we need this, we have to have this, our brains are being dashed out on the pavement. There's massive violence in the Civil War South, you know, in the post-war South, vigilante violence, Klan violence, all kinds of... I mean freed people are being slaughtered, and he says, you know, we're being hung from lampposts, we have to have this, it's an imperative in this moment. And Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton say no. And they bolt from that alliance and they form a new organization, and they leave their abolitionists colleagues in the dust. And they leave a bunch of their women's suffrage colleagues in the dust too. So this splits, not just the abolitionist and the woman's suffragists, it splits the suffragists. A whole lot of women suffragists say no, Lucy Stone and others, we will remain with the 15th amendment. We will support it and we will continue to fight for its gradual expansion.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's Suffrage Narrative

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LISA TETRAULT:

That narrative we were talking about, the suffrage merriment, Stanton and Anthony end up writing it. They're the ones who really give the movement its history. And so they give their version of the story, and really they're at the center of the story. And when we remember the suffrage movement, we largely remember them. And that's how they intended it. But there were all these other suffragists including those that stayed aligned with the 15th amendment, and Lucy Stone is chief among those. And she's largely forgotten today, but she was as influential and as important in Stanton and Anthony. She started her career as early as they did. She cut her teeth in abolition in the 1840s. She went to Oberlin. She was one of the first women to get an equal college degree. She would live all the way through to the end of the 19th century and be fighting her own fight, parallel to Stanton and Anthony's. They fought two different fights and they would hate each other really for the rest of their lives.

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LISA TETRAULT:

Part of the reason we don't remember Lucy Stone is she never understood what Stanton and Anthony understood, the power of historical narrative. She refused to participate in their history project. Stanton and Anthony start writing history. About halfway through the suffrage, about halfway through that kind of... If we use 1848 to 1920, which is problematic. But if we use that, about halfway through, they realize they need some reinforcements. And the reinforcements they pick is history writing as a way to start controlling the narrative and making an argument. And Lucy Stone refuses to participate and she says, "We don't have time to write history. We have a movement to fight." What Stanton and Anthony understood, but I don't think could have

openly articulated, I think they understood it tacitly was history writing was movement fighting. Lucy Stone never understands that and she therefore, doesn't leave a readymade narrative to future generations to understand this story and she's left out of it.

Endemic injustice within justice movements

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LISA TETRAULT:

How do we grapple with the racism in people that we want to have as heroes? I think what we realize is that racism is endemic to the United States. It is endemic to how we are... The air we breathe. It is endemic to the food we eat. It is endemic to everything that we do. So we shouldn't be surprised when people that we want to be justice warriors express and imbue and reflect and in fact, perpetuate some of that racist stew that is America. I think what we do with it is we try to understand how do we fight justice movements that can simultaneously fight racism? I think the suffrage movement reminds us that we really have to be thinking constantly about the ways in which justice movements often have conservative elements within them and can do damage while they're also doing good. I think that's a caution to us today because we're no different.

Double standard for women and leaders as imperfect

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LISA TETRAULT:

The other thing is I think that we still have a double standard, both in terms of how we treat politicians today according to whether they're men or women, but also about how we judge them in the past. We tend to think that not only do we want our justice heroes to be idyllic, we also, if they're women, we really think they ought to have been somehow pure and cooperative and congenial and supportive of everyone. We don't often permit women in the past to be savvy, to be manipulative, to be self confident, to be exclusive because those are not traits we necessarily associate with women's behavior. We think they should be... Women are not supposed to be powerful and they're not supposed to be ambitious and they're not supposed to be domineering. A lot of these social activists who were women in the 19th century were, but we don't remember them that way. When we do remember them that way, sometimes we want to throw them out because we think, "Oh, they're no good." When in fact, they're human and we should embrace that complexity about them, not throw them out because they turned out not to be perfect. In some ways, that sets us up for a completely unreal standard for what we ought to be to be political beings today. Political beings are not perfect beings. They are beings that have to constantly interrogate themselves and that's work these women remind us we need to constantly do.

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LISA TETRAULT:

One of the things that the sort of mainstream women's movement fought for in that early incarnation of it, back in the early 19th century, was the idea that women should just be able to stand up and speak of politics. And that's

something we're still fighting for today. That women can stand up and be political and be assertive. And that's something we still don't except as easily in women today as we do in men. And that's something those early women were fighting for that we're still fighting for.

The Constitution doesn't enshrine the right to vote

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LISA TETRAULT:

Dawning, next year is the a 150th anniversary of the 15th amendment and the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, which are the first two amendments in the Constitution ever to address voting. They're actually the only pieces of the Constitution that address voting in terms of individual voting. When the constitution was written, it was left to the States to determine who voters were. So States and their Constitutions have a clause that says these are the people that may vote. And almost always, by the time we're talking about, it was white men, over the age of 21. And so the 15th amendment says you can't put white in your state Constitutions because that's race. And so the 15th amendment says you can't discriminate on the basis of race. It does not say black men have the right to vote. And the 19th amendment, similarly, says you can't put the word male in your Constitutions because that discriminates on the basis of sex. It says you can't discriminate on the basis of sex. It's modeled on the same wording as the 15th. So that takes male out of State Constitutions and effectively allows women to vote. But nowhere in the United States Constitution, and it's one of the great misnomers and one of the great misunderstandings, I think of American

citizenship, is there a right to vote. There is no right to vote enshrined in the Constitution.

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LISA TETRAULT:

We're one of the only constitutional democracies in the world right now that does not enshrine a right to vote in its constitution. And so people speak regularly about the right to vote for this person. And women won the right to vote. Black men won the right to vote. And it makes for a great story because it makes us feel as if somehow a democratic expansion is happening and is protected somehow because it's a sacred right, when neither of those things are true. We have had way more democratic contraction in the United States than we've ever had expansion, and there is no enshrined right to vote. That right to vote is constantly still now and has been historically abridged and denied. And the Constitution mostly does not stop that.

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LISA TETRAULT:

I mean if we had for example a right to vote in the constitution, when states put in place a poll tax or when states put in place an understanding clause, that would violate your fundamental right to vote and those would be illegal. But without a right to vote in the constitution, those are perfectly allowed. States can continue to abridge voting ability of citizens indefinitely until we have a constitutional right to vote.

The 19th Amendment

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LISA TETRAULT:

What the 19th amendment did was not grant women the right to vote. It took the word male out of the state constitutions where they described who voters had to be. So the 19th amendment says States and governments may not discriminate in voting on the basis of sex and Congress shall have the power to enforce this legislation. That's all it says. So States may not, and governments may not discriminate in voting on the basis of sex. So what that does, because States appoint voters, it takes the word male out of state constitutions where voters are defined and effectively enfranchises women. But it does not assertively enfranchise women and it does not say women must have a right to vote. That cannot be abridged. It just says you can't deny women voting because they're women because of their sex. You can deny them poll taxes, understanding clauses, literacy tests, all that's perfectly constitutional. So lots of women don't get the right to vote in 1920 because they're still barred by other state disqualifications, but they're no longer barred by sex as a state disqualification.

Importance of voting

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LISA TETRAULT:

Why should we care about the right to vote? Because it is the closest we will get to being able to make this nation into a vision of what we want it to be. Or not it's the closest that we will get, but it's one of the instruments that we

have in terms of making this nation into the vision that we think it ought to be.

By law, voting is a privilege, not a right

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LISA TETRAULT:

When we hear that today, voting is a privilege, we think of someone being retrograde, right? And being, wanting to reverse the democratic right to vote in the United States. But one of the things, the women's suffrage movement... The women's suffrages do after the 15th amendment has passed and they're left out of it because it only says race and not sex. They just start going to the polls and voting. And arguing, we are citizens, therefore we're entitled to a right to vote. Because the 15th amendment, for the first time, says the right to vote. But it's an allusion to something that doesn't exist. So they say, "Well, if there's a right to vote, then we must have that right because we're citizens. So therefore we're just going to go to the polls and start voting." They get arrested for voting illegally. The case makes its way up to the United States Supreme Court in an 1875, in Minor v. Happersett the Supreme Court says, 'Voting is not a right of citizenship. Your logic is completely faulty. Voting is a privilege and you haven't earned that privilege. Voting is not a right of citizenship.' So the Supreme Court itself is incredibly clear about this—and that remains true today. Voting is considered a privilege and not a right in the United States, although almost all citizens of the United States, if you were to ask them what the most basic right of citizenship is, they would say the vote. But it is not enshrined as a right, it's a right that we need to secure

and obtain. And I think we forget that when we talk about 1920 women won the right to vote, 1965 voting rights act finally fix those remaining problems. Now we have a full-fledged democracy. We don't.

Progress for women's rights

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LISA TETRAULT:

One of the problems with measuring the suffrage movement, the kind of mainstream suffrage movement by the vote, is that we tend to just look at that. When in fact, remember that movement grew out of a movement that had lots and lots of demands: education, income, income independence for women, access to the professions. And one of the things that happened is the suffrage movement progresses, over whatever time span that you want to you want to attribute to it, is that women start to win some of those rights. So there's all kinds of change and progress and advancements happening over this time period. Women start getting access to equal college educations with men. Women start being able to own property. Women are still advocating for divorce, not getting it very well, still advocating for protection from violence from men, not getting it really. So, there's a lot of things that they're still fighting for, but a lot of these things they're starting to get access to. Or at least white, well-to-do women who are the first to avail themselves of these opportunities are getting access to those things. It will take a long time before a large swath of women are able to avail themselves of all those sort of opportunities.

1913: The “new woman”

01:32:26:09

LISA TETRAULT:

By 1913 or so there's this phenomenon called the New Woman. And the New Woman is this new young independent woman who works for a while, forestalls marriage, has some economic independence, sometimes has a fair degree of education and there's a kind of youth culture that emerges. And there's dating and there's flirting and people are now going out and going to dances, independent of adult supervision. And there is this new woman who's supposed to be the emblem of female emancipation. She rides a bike. She doesn't dress any more in this kind of heavy Victorian garb. She wears a kind of straight flapper dress. And so there's that new woman, although she was a very complicated and multifaceted figure, is supposed to stand in for the progress of women—look how far women have come. And people hold up the New Woman all the time to say, "Woman has all the right she could need, why would she need the vote?" Look at this new woman. She's totally emancipated. But lots of other women couldn't avail themselves of those opportunities.

Restrictions and inequality for women

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LISA TETRAULT:

So many of the same problems still plagued this culture and these women, however. there was still a sense that women ought to be peacemakers, passive, kind of they ought to be in the home, not out in the public. They

ought to be subservient. They ought to be deferential. And there's also a sense that women don't still have a legal independence in many ways. They can't, for example, take out loans or... particularly if they're married. There's no way to kind of get access to this whole world of credit. The financial world is still very closed off to women, particularly if you're married, which most women are. Educational opportunities are still very limited in some ways. And even if you are able to go to college with men, sometimes you're shunted into the woman's path, kind of into the woman's college. I know at my institution, Carnegie Mellon for example, there was a women's college whereby you could major in home ec while the boys were out there majoring in chemical engineering. So there's still all kinds of double standards whereby men are allowed to do a lot of things in public and get away with things, whereby women are heavily sanctioned for the same types of behavior.

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LISA TETRAULT:

You know, early flirting, early romance, early dating. And violence against women is an endemic problem for all women. And something that still, the way that we don't see it today and we minimize, it was minimized and dismissed at the time as well. So there are all these things. Unequal earning. Still, women are earning less than men and they're being segregated into lower paying jobs. And this was even worse if you were an African American woman, then you were segregated into domestic service. So there are all kinds of ways in which the challenges remain tremendous. That's a lot. Is that too much?

Movements in the 19th Century

01:35:29:16

LISA TETRAULT:

That ferment of the post civil war world where everyone thinks we can remake the world into the vision we want for it doesn't die out with the ending of reconstruction. It continues to flower over the rest of the 19th century. There's a labor movement. There's an anarchist movement, there's a free love movement, a kind of sex radical movement. There's a birth control movement. There's a temperance movement, and the temperance movement has tight ties with the suffrage movement. They become heavily interwoven. And the temperance movement says, "We need the votes so that we can vote out liquor." And one of the things we forget about the temperance movement is that it was actually more radical than we remember. We think of it as a bunch of teetotaling upstanding ladies, which they were. But they were also arguing, even if they had the cause and effect quite wrong, that alcohol causes men's violence. And so they were very much fighting for a world whereby the home would be safe. We have this idyllic version of the home that's supposed to be a sanctified rest, a place of refuge, a place of nurturance. And a lot of women realize that the homes, they were in didn't promise those things. In fact, they were being beaten, they were being manipulated, they were being... They were going hungry. They didn't have access to money to buy kids' food. To buy their kids shoes. And so they started going after alcohol as a way to argue if we can get rid of alcohol, we can make the home the place that it's supposed to be. Of course, it wasn't that easy, but they win their fight before the suffragists do. The 18th amendment, just before the suffrage amendment, is prohibition.

Alice Paul

01:36:58:01

LISA TETRAULT:

Perhaps in the suffrage movement, the person who most emblemized this new woman, this kind of liberated emancipated woman who took her life under her own power and self-directed herself was Alice Paul, one of the famous leaders in the suffrage movement. She had advanced education. She had gone to college. She had a period as a career woman. She was a social worker. She's traveled abroad. She went to England and while she was there, launching her career as a single woman with education, she became associated with the suffrage movement in Britain, which was quite militant. And she started learning all kinds of militant tactics and being quite assertive politically. And then she would come back to the US and bring that kind of militance to the US suffrage movement and launch a new chapter of the suffrage movement that was one that was in your face and unrelenting and assertive. And a lot of people like Alice Paul, I think, because she seems more like the modern woman we know as opposed to these kinds of deferential, heavily clothed, Victorian women of the 19th century. So there's a huge generational split in the movement and Alice Paul emblemizes this new woman. And she would be single and have a career for herself her entire life.

Carrie Chapman Catt

01:38:22:19

LISA TETRAULT:

Carrie Chapman Catt represents this kind of older guard of a woman that came of age during the Victorian era rather than the 19 teens and the 1920s. Who's still heavily dressed in Victorian garb and who takes a more deferential approach to politics. And we're going to curry the favor and the likeability of these politicians rather than coming up and throwing a sign up in their face yelling at them.

Winning suffrage at the state level

01:38:48:02

LISA TETRAULT:

When Stanton and Anthony go off and break from the feminist abolitionists coalition, they start a very new demand: suffrage by federal amendment. And that is a brand new idea after the war because nobody thought the federal constitution could be used to enforce voting rights—that was a state prerogative. A bunch of suffragists argue that's unconstitutional, that still belongs to the States and Lucy Stone and a bunch of other people fight for voting at the States. In other words, go state by state and get male taken out of the constitution. That is a dual strategy that moves forward all the way to the 20th century. Working at the state level and working at the federal level, you've got two branches of the movement. The state movement starts to win. A lot of victories. States out West and states in other places start enfranchising women and allowing them access to the ballot. By the time you get to the... But the federal amendment has been stalled and has failed repeatedly, repeatedly, repeatedly. So when Carrie Chapman Catt gets appointed Anthony's successor in the movement, she realizes that a direct

fight for the federal amendment is not winnable because it's just repeatedly lost. So what she decides, and she comes up with a plan that says, "Let's win suffrage in a couple of key states where women have huge voting power if they were enfranchised. And then we'll put pressure on the Democratic Party with female voters to pass a federal amendment."

01:40:14:12

LISA TETRAULT:

So Carrie Chapman Catt is busy with the ground game and she's going to try to win over key states. New York, for example, gives women the right to vote in 1917, California, really powerful states. While Alice Paul says, "To heck with that ground game, I'm going to go straight to the president and I'm going to go straight to Congress." And she's busy doing that. And it's really the two strategies that come together. Had it not been for these other states falling and granting women's voting rights, I don't think Alice Paul would have had any success with the federal amendment. But it was never that Carrie Chapman Catt gave up on the federal amendment, she just didn't think going directly for it was doable.

Women leading the movement studying history

01:40:54:02

LISA TETRAULT:

They absolutely are studying history. They're studying other radical movements. They are veterans in political organizing. These women are come up in a... They come of age in a movement that is fully formed and fully

active. And they are... They cut their teeth in movement struggles. They're trained by activists before them.

Generational tension in the suffrage movement

01:41:17:08

LISA TETRAULT:

Oh, so there's this all kinds of generational tension. Carrie Chapman Catt thinks Alice Paul is going to cost them the vote. She thinks that her direct militant strategy is going to alienate people so much that the vote is going to be lost. She doesn't like these new women. She also doesn't like her own leadership being challenged. Alice Paul challenges Carrie Chapman Catt, goes off and forms a new organization. Carrie Chapman Catt is quite convinced, in the kind of self-assured way that many of these suffrage leaders had, that she knows the right way and everyone should fall in line behind her. And if you don't, you are messing up the works. Whereas Alice Paul looks at Carrie Chapman Catt and just thinks "Y'all are a bunch of fuddy duddy old ladies." There's a lot of ageism in this, and you see this over and over again in women's movements. The younger generation thinking the older generation is nothing but a bunch of conservative drag. They're old biddies. They got nothing that we need. You know. We understand the way the future. And it showcases, in many ways, youthful optimism. And that kind of youthful sense that I know the way to fix the world.

Women's Suffrage in states

01:42:24 :13

LISA TETRAULT:

So, when Wilson takes office in 1913 women are already voting in nine states. So, woman's suffrage is not something new and untried. It's being practiced, and being experimented with, and being accepted in a whole wide range of places already. T here are other states where women have partial suffrage rights. And partial suffrage rights was whereby you didn't get voting on equal terms with men, you got the right to vote only in certain types of elections. So like Illinois for example, gives women presidential suffrage, you can vote for president, but you can't vote for anything else. So by 1920 I think there are only eight states that where women are not voting in some fashion and many where they're voting on the same terms as men. So tons of women are voting before 1920 and tons of women aren't voting after 1920.

Setting the stage for a federal women's suffrage amendment

01:43:10:23

LISA TETRAULT:

The fact that so many women are voting, that states pull the word male from their voting clauses before 1920, I think convinces Americans that civilization is not going to fall if women vote. And I think that sets the stage for making the federal amendment possible. The other thing that makes the federal amendment possible is World War I. Many, many social movements have very successfully leveraged America's claim to democracy abroad while denying it at home. And what Alice Paul does very, very effectively is say, "You're fighting this war, World War I, to make the world safe for democracy, but you're denying it at home." And that becomes a political embarrassment

for the United States. And I think that makes the federal amendment possible as well.

Complexity of the struggle

01:43:58:03

LISA TETRAULT:

I think when we tie these things up in these nice linear narratives that end in happy ending points, we miss all of the complexity that it takes to try to fight for something. We miss all the complexity, all the myriad individual local battles that you have to fight to get someplace and the unbelievable amounts of strategizing it takes. The fact that you might be strategizing in the wrong direction. It's not always clear what the proper path forward is. And that itself can be a real limitation for social movements. What's the best way forward? It can be very hard to know. And of course in the suffrage movement, they had different ideas about what was the best move forward.

Tactics of the National Women's Party: The 1913 suffrage parade and direct action

01:44:39:21

LISA TETRAULT:

The organization that Alice Paul creates is the National Women's Party after being essentially ousted from Carrie Chapman Catt's National American Women's Suffrage Association, which people usually pronounce as an acronym, NAWSA. And the National Women's party is full of young, youthful people who decide they're going to take their fight to the streets. They're not

going to go try to cultivate politicians. They start with, just before they're created in 1913, this massive parade in New York city, and it's the largest parade to take to the streets, like a protest parade, to take to the streets in New York, in American history to date, at that point. They stage it on the eve of Woodrow Wilson's inauguration so that they can upstage him. And sure enough, thousands and thousands, hundreds of thousands perhaps, of people show up to watch this parade and Wilson arrives in town. And where is everybody? So Alice Paul stages this massive march to create a show of force in their floats and delegations from suffragists all around the nation. And the crowd becomes incensed that these women have taken to the streets, because of course, good respectable women don't do this, and the crowd starts attacking the marchers. People are sent to the hospital. People have broken bones. I mean it's really... It's quite a melee. And the police turn a blind eye. They watch this go on and they offer no protection to the women of course. Because they're fallen women, they've taken to the streets, they don't deserve men's protection. And Carrie Chapman Catt is incensed, she thinks this is bad press for the movement and eventually Alice Paul is kicked out of NAWSA. She then goes on to found the National Women's Party and keeps up this tactic of direct action. One of the things she does is start stationing picketers outside the White House.

01:46:34:07

LISA TETRAULT:

People don't picket the White House yet. We now think of this as a familiar tactic, that was brand new. So they had these banners and they would just stand silently outside the White House gates saying, "Mr. President, how long was must women wait for Liberty, votes for women." And they would stand

there and at first Woodrow Wilson is cheerfully tolerant of them. Oh, these cute little women. They'll go away after a while. And then winter comes and they're still there. And then summer comes in, they're still there. And then World War I breaks out and they keep picketing. And you do not picket a wartime president. That is unpatriotic. But they do, they continue to picket him and he is so incensed that he starts to have the women arrested. But the problem is that they're perfectly within their legal rights. They're standing on public property outside the White House, holding a sign quietly. They are not breaking any laws. So they trump up a reason to arrest them. They are essentially political prisoners for speaking their minds. And they say that they have obstructed traffic, and by obstructing traffic they have broken the law. And they start to round up these women, throw them into paddy wagons and assume they'll go away. They go to court, they refuse to pay their court fines, they go to the workhouse. More women show up, they throw them in paddy wagons, they refuse to pay their fine, they go to the workhouse. So you start to have a huge crop of political prisoners in a workhouse, the Occoquan Workhouse, and president Wilson is beside himself about how to shut these women up. And then they really take a dis-authority. They start taking the words from his speeches about why America is fighting World War I—to make the world safe for democracy—and they start weeding them and then throwing them into a bin of... A fire, setting them on fire.

01:48:23:08

LISA TETRAULT:

Mr. President, how must... And then they unfurl a banner that says Kaiser Wilson and United States is in war against German... Up against the Kaiser of Germany. So they're starting to call him the Kaiser. So what began as a very

quiet protest outside the White House grows into something quite dramatic. And eventually the women in the prisons will go on a hunger strike. They will argue we are political prisoners and they will go on a hunger strike. Because they were worried that these women would die and they would be martyrs for the cause, they start force feeding them, they strap them down in chairs and they stick a tube down their throat, all the way down and then they whip up eggs and pour it into a funnel and just take it down into your... Straight in... Alice Paul would have stomach troubles and esophagus troubles for the rest of her life. She would have smelling problems for the rest of her life. And eventually these women are released from prison. And Alice Paul knows a political opportunity when she sees one. She has these women in prison attire go on a train and go start speaking for suffrage across the United States. It's called the Prison Special. So she sends them out for publicity and essentially says, "We are political prisoners."

Hunger strikes and force feedings

01:49:40:04

LISA TETRAULT:

Alice Paul learned about hunger striking from, in fact, she had been on a hunger strike when she was in Britain. So, she learned about hunger strikes from her time in Britain before she had come back to the United States where she cut her teeth on British suffragism. And that had been an age-old tactic in England and in Ireland to go on hunger strikes. So, she imports that into the U.S. While these wardens thought they could stop this hunger strike by force feeding these women, by force feeding them they actually fueled the

effectiveness of their hunger strike. Because people out in the public became so appalled that these women were being force-fed because it was so brutal. They would put them in chairs and literally strap them, kind of like if you think of an electric chair. You would be strapped in and you would be flipped back. And then, you would have a tube forced down your throat. You would gag. You would bleed. And then, they would put a funnel at the top of the tube and they would whip up eggs or whatever it might be, and then they would just pour it into the funnel and it would come down. The women would vomit. They had bloody noses routinely. Alice Paul had stomach problems and esophagus problems for the rest of her life. It left many of these women permanently damaged in terms of their airways, breathing problems. It was brutal. This was not an IV that went in that slowly dripped nutrients into you.

Public sympathy for the suffragettes

01:51:05:05

LISA TETRAULT:

The National Women's Party knows what's going on inside the prison, right? And they start publicizing what's happening. And that starts to create a great deal of public sympathy for these women. And again, they're treating a bit on their gender. Right? You don't manhandle women. I mean, literally man, right? You don't do that. That's not what we do to good, upstanding, white women. You might do that with women who you have less respect for but... and this creates a great deal of sympathy in the American public for both the... it also catapults this story to the front page in a way that this story had

been around for a long time. How do you keep it on page one? And it brings this story back to a degree of publicity that it had been lacking.

Night of Terror

01:51:49:04

LISA TETRAULT:

Okay. In the fall of 1917, there was a very famous night known as the Night of Terror when the prison wardens and the prison staff became incredibly violent and abusive. They went after the suffragists and attacked them. They threw them down onto the floor, they smash their heads, they threw them over chairs. Women suffered major contusions to the head injuries. Lucy Burns was beaten, and then had her hands tied, cuffed to the bars of her cell all night. She had to stay in like this. And women suffered unspeakable violence that evening. And that, again, softened public opinion about suffragists and about what they were fighting for.

Woodrow Wilson's conversion on suffrage

01:52:36:22

LISA TETRAULT:

Wilson is the first southern president since the Civil War. And Wilson has pretty retrograde racial policies. In fact, he will support a sort of rise of the Klan and a variety of other things that's happening. And his support for these women really is a kind of conversion. And I also think they embarrass him to a significant degree to the point where he supports it. So, he will come out

very famously and give an address to Congress and say, please support this legislation. We need this. And a lot of people also argue that women's wartime service... so one of the things the National American Women's Suffrage Association, NAWSA, Carrie Chapman's group does, throws itself into war support as a way to try to curry favor of politicians and say, look, we made ourselves essential to this nation during the war. You should enfranchise us. That's another reason I think Wilson's support comes around.

01:53:34:20

LISA TETRAULT:

Like with most historical turning points, we want to pinpoint the thing that made it turning, that turned the tide. But really it's an accretion of a million things over time that eventually tip the scales. So, we can't say the one thing that led to Wilson's conversion, but we can look at all of the kinds of pressure that was being put on him and the ways in which the nation itself was starting to turn. Women's suffrage was being enacted in a lot of different places. It just started to have a kind of insurmountable momentum to it that I think Wilson eventually joined.

Power of social movements to push legislative change

01:54:11:08

LISA TETRAULT:

Without social movements, we wouldn't have all of the great things that we think of as our nation. Social movements have really made many, many, many of those foundations, those apparatus, those institutions, those beliefs, those

affirmations. Most of that has come from social movements in American history.

Passage of the 19th amendment

01:54:37:21

LISA TETRAULT:

As this growing momentum starts push ing women's suffrage to the fore again, at least in the form of a federal amendment, remember it had lots of forms at the state, in 1918 Congress very sort of boisterously takes up a vote and it narrowly fails. It fails by a very, very small margin. And what the National Women's Party and also the NAWSA decide is they're going to go to those states, to those legislators who voted against, and they're going to try to get them out of office over the break. Because a lot of them are up for reelection. And, indeed, the new Congress that comes in the following year in 1919, they've gotten a lot of those men out of office. And people's ideas have changed. And, by 1919 they take a second vote in the House and the Senate and it passes both. And where it had been pretty overwhelmingly defeated in the Senate and more narrowly in the House, it passes pretty overwhelmingly in the House and the Senate the second time around. So, you see a really huge sea change in terms of the, the legislator's, the Congress people's willingness to entertain this idea. It has to pass both houses of Congress by a two-thirds majority. Then it has to go to the states. And all the states have to say, we agree to add this to our constitution. And three fourths of the states have to say that. So, once the Congress passes it, it's by no means assured that it's going to be added to the constitution. Then the ratification fight starts. And

three fourths of the states, which means some of the racist, southern, white states have to have to ratify. Otherwise, it won't go to the constitution. They need southern states. And this is, of course, where Tennessee comes in.

Tennessee as the last state to ratify the 19th Amendment

01:56:23:03

LISA TETRAULT:

Ratification is a hard fight. To add something to the U.S. Constitution is no small business. You have to get two thirds of the House to vote for it, two thirds of the Senate to vote for it. And then, you have to have three fourths of the states ratify it, in other words agree to have it added to the Constitution. And that required support from people who were staunch suffrage opponents, white supremacist legislators, and congress people, and white supremacist states in the south. And that was a hard fight and not at all assured that it would happen. So, again, and again, and again, the white supremacists who control the legislators in the South, in the deep South refuse to take it up or vote it down. It passes very quickly about 34... I think it picks up 34 states relatively quickly. And then it stalls, and it stalls, and it stalls, and it stalls. And they need some more states. And Tennessee, which was a slave state prior to the war, the governor calls a special session quite convinced that he's going to state Tennessee's opposition to the matter, right? He calls it with the intent expression of stating Tennessee's opposition to the matter. And much to his surprise, Tennessee turns out to be the turning point. It is a huge fight inside Tennessee.

01:57:52:01

LISA TETRAULT:

There are all forces, the suffrage forces, the anti-suffrage forces all descend on Tennessee. They're lobbying the politicians late into the night. They're getting them drunk. They have an opposition headquarters. It's a melee. The vote happens. No, no, no. It's pretty clear the no's are going to have it until a young man named Harry Burn, Harry T. Burn, who was the youngest member of the Tennessee legislature, 23 years old. He, right before the vote, gets a letter from his mother urging him to support it. And she tells him in this to be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt put the rat in ratification. And he changes his vote and he says, aye. And, with that, the amendment carries, one more person changes their vote, and it carries by two. But one person made the difference. It came down to this 23-year-old boy who got a letter from his mother telling him to be a good boy. And obviously that was necessary for it to go, but it was all that work before that made this moment possible. And so, it passes. And, much to the governor's chagrin, Tennessee is now the southern state that ratifies. And with that, the 19th Amendment is added to the U.S. Constitution.

Jim Crow and disenfranchisement of African Americans

01:59:08:18

LISA TETRAULT:

The thing that we can't forget is that while this suffrage story, this sort of women's suffrage story is unfolding across this arc of the late 1800s into the early 1900s, there is simultaneously a suppression of democracy going on in the United States at exactly the same time. After the American civil war, black

men had, against great odds, been able to vote and had voted in massive numbers. And that voting had been put down sometimes by vigilante violence, but it was still happening. And it was still legally possible. And, by the 1890s, the white supremacist south wants to formally disenfranchise black men. So, at exactly the same time that the suffrage movement is taking off and getting victories. The white suffrage movement, looking for any political opportunity, sees that the white supremacist south is casting about for how do we formally disenfranchise black men, right? We look at this stuff when it happens and think, well of course they knew what they were... they don't know how to do this at first. How are we going to formally disenfranchise black men? And the white suffrage movement shows up and says, why don't you enfranchise women? And then, white women will outnumber the black vote.

02:00:21:12

LISA TETRAULT:

And that way you can shut down... and then people say, but this is also going to enfranchise black women. And the white movement says, well, why don't you put in an educational test then? So, the white women will pass the educational test and black women won't. And then, white women can overwhelm because they're trying to get white southern support for a federal amendment, which they don't otherwise have. Not surprising to anyone, the white south, the white male south says, no thank you. That's not the way we'd like to do this. And they eventually settle on... they realize that the Constitution doesn't bar them from disenfranchising on other grounds. They can't formally disenfranchise on the basis of race, but they could stick in an educational clause. They could stick in an understanding clause. They could

stick in a poll tax. And all of that is perfectly constitutional. And so, that starts in 1890 and is largely finished by 1913 across the south. And you get that apparatus of laws, those Jim Crow laws that formally bar black men from voting. So, what we forget is we think black men never had the right to vote and finally got it in the 20th century. They had it and then it was taken away over exactly the same time period that women are getting access to the vote.

Voting Rights Act of 1965: finishes the work of suffrage

02:01:30:19

LISA TETRAULT:

1965 the Voting Rights Act is really when the United States finally becomes a full-fledged democracy for the first time. When there are, again, Congress being the body that protects this puts in place laws that really make the practice of democracy at the state level have to be meaningful. And it's 1965 really where many women of color finally get access to the vote and many men of color finally get access to vote. And then, the Voting Rights Act is reauthorized multiple times. And, in one of those reauthorizations they, for example, say we need bilingual ballots. And finally Hispanic people who couldn't read an English ballot get access to the ballot. So, the Voting Rights Act is really one of the most effective pieces of federal legislation ever in U.S. history. And it has been effectively gutted and destroyed by the Supreme Court in 2013. And what we have now is active voter suppression going on once again, because we don't have the Voting Rights Act protecting the ballot of citizens at the state level.

02:02:36:07

LISA TETRAULT:

Does 1965 finish the work of women's suffrage? I guess that depends on what we think the work of women's suffrage was. Is it securing a right to vote? If that's the goal, then we haven't finished our work yet. Was the goal to get white women the right to vote? Then that's been secured. Was the goal just to get all women the right to vote? Or was it just to get women voting access? On any number of measures, I would say that we have not fulfilled the promise of 1920,which was that women should have a right to vote, which is what I think of it as, even if that wasn't explicitly what was won in 1920. And that remains unfinished. And there is massive voter suppression going on right now in the United States, largely because of the gutting of the Voting Rights Act. And, to me, the best way to honor this centennial is to get out there and fight for people's meaningful access to the ballot.

The Equal Rights Amendment

02:03:33:23

LISA TETRAULT:

Another one of the sad chapters of the mainstream suffrage movement is what happens at 1920. And that is lots of women of color cannot vote around the United States. Many women of color can vote in 1920. Right? If you're an African American in Chicago, you can vote in 1920. But, if you were an African American in Alabama, they have poll taxes, and literacy tests, and understanding clauses still on the constitution, their state constitution, barring you from voting. So, a lot of women can't vote after 1920, and largely women of color. They come to the mainstream suffrage organizations and

say, our fight is not over. Come join me in my fight for my voting rights. And those two organizations both say, no. That's not our fight. That's not our problem. That's a race problem. Our fight is over. And there's a suffrage movement that continues, but it's largely a suffrage movement that's embedded in other civil rights movements of women demanding the right to vote, often alongside men. And what the two main flagship organizations will do is not fight for the continued voting rights of other women. The National Woman's Party, Alice Paul's organization, will kind of flounder for a couple of years and then they will decide, if the 19th amendment we shouldn't discriminate on the basis of sex in voting, why not have an amendment that says we shouldn't discriminate on the basis of sex in anything?

02:05:07:11

LISA TETRAULT:

And they propose the very first Equal Rights Amendment in 1923. And that becomes Alice Paul's life work after suffrage as she works for the Equal Rights Amendment, arguing that there ought to be a constitutional amendment saying that discrimination on the basis of sex in any way is unconstitutional. And that still, of course we know, has not passed today. Well, it past Congress but was never ratified. The ferment around the '60s in the '70s, the Women's Liberation Movement and the Women's Rights Movement, will pick up the ERA, the work that Alice Paul has been pursuing. Alice Paul is still alive. And they will pick that work up. And they will try to get it to pass Congress, which eventually it does, obviously, in the 1970s and then fails ratification in the '80s. So, now there's a movement actually to go to the states that haven't ratified, get them to ratify now. This is happening right now. And then, go to Congress and say, we now have all the states we need.

You need to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. But whether they're still within the timeframe allowed is unclear, so.

02;06:07:01

LISA TETRAULT:

And NAWSA, Carrie Chapman Cat's organization, morphs into an organization we all know today, the League of Women Voters. And they say, okay. If we're going to have a voting populace now, a kind of mass voting populace, that populace ought to be educated about what the issues and what the candidates are. And they turn into a kind of voter education program.

The need for legislation against sex discrimination

02:06:27:11

LISA TETRAULT

We actually do need robust legislation around sex discrimination. Sex discrimination. If you look back at that period and you think about women's lives, sex discrimination is something that is thought necessary, and good, and allowed. So, there was all sorts of discrimination on the basis of sex for all of the 19th century and most of the 20th century. And it's not going to be till the 1970s and the 1980s that women start to pioneer and get judicial courts to agree with them that sex discrimination is in fact wrong. And even then it's going to be agreed to on a very narrow basis. So, even still today, sex discrimination is, in many cases, considered necessary, okay, wise. Because of course, men and women are fundamentally different, many would argue.

And, of course, many would argue that's a falsity that perpetuates inequality. There's a sense that women should not have the same rights as men because they're not same creature as men. And that women belong in the home, that's their God appointed station. And that society depends upon it. It's not just that we like it as men. It's actually civilization depends on women in the home and men in the public, and men in politics and women in rearing and nurturing. And should that be upset say by women's suffrage, by catapulting women into politics and into the public, the family itself will crumble and there will go civilization.

Waves of Feminism

02:07:54:23

LISA TETRAULT:

One of the legacies of the narrative that Stanton and Anthony wrote has been this idea that we had a first wave of feminism and a second wave of feminism. And the first wave, of course, was 1848 to 1920, largely organized around the right to vote. And then, the idea is that activism recedes and it's kind of quiet for a while. And then, there's this huge resurgence, a second wave of activism in 1960s around the Women's Liberation Movement and the Women's Rights Movement. That's not helpful for all kinds of reasons. One is, 1920 was not such a clear ending point as we would make it out to be. There's still all kinds of feminist activism between 1920 and 1963, if we want to pick the Feminine Mystique or something. And what we do when we talk about first and second wave feminism is we erase all the continuity. We also erase all the feminist activism that's taking place in other places than the suffrage movement and the mainstream women's movement. There's all

kinds of women's activism inside the communist movement, inside the labor movement. So, better to broaden our view and see all the complicated ways in which feminist demands and women's rights manifest in multiple movements at multiple times, than to limit ourselves to look at these two waves, which again is a largely white women's narrative.

Yeah.

Separation of the sexes

02:09:17:16

LISA TETRAULT:

Part of what supported the idea of separation of the sexes and different treatment of the sexes, was the idea that they were biologically different. They were fundamentally different biological creatures. And in all through the 19th century and through much of the 20th century, it was thought that women's bodies were governed by their uterus. That was the governing organ in a woman's body. Whereas in a man's body, the governing organ was the brain. And so for women you couldn't get them too excited. You couldn't stick them out in the public. You can stick them in politics. Because their uterus would get frenzied and they would become hysterical. In fact the term hysteria is the idea that the uterus has gone crazy in a woman's body. And this was a medical condition in the late 19th, early 20th century. Women would suffer from hysteria and they would have to go on rescuers. And this idea perpetuates for a really long time. And then people also argue women can't have equal education, because what will happen is that while they're being educated, the blood will be directed to their brain and that will wither

away their uterus. There won't be sufficient blood to nurture the uterus, and therefore that woman will lose childbearing capacity and might have damaged offspring.

02:10:28:09

LISA TETRAULT:

So actually education for women, while it might sound like a nice idea, was actually contrary to biology. And there were very famous physicians, Dr. Edward Clarke being the most famous Harvard physician who wrote this book called A Fair Chance for Girls, a treatise against women's equal education. So, it's not like this movement was up against just some quaint ideas. I mean, men were trotting out biology as absolute evidence that you could not tamper with this order, because biology dictated the way in which the sexes are organized. And that'll be true, and we still have many remnants of all of that today. I mean one of the reasons people impugned Hillary Clinton as a president is what's going to happen during that time of the month? Is she going to go crazy? Can she handle a nuke button given that time in the month? Is she too emotional, is she too ... Which is this idea that women's reproductive organs make them unstable somehow, that we are fundamentally unstable biological beings, a nd therefore can't be entrusted with the same rights and the same prerogatives and the same responsibilities as the stable body man. As a historian, I look around, I'm like, Oh yeah, this is just about right where I would expect us to be given ... Yeah. Although, to be honest, one of the things that constantly astounds me as a historian is the ways in which social movements have managed to prevail against all odds. It is really a remarkable thing and gives me lots of optimism and hope.

The power of ordinary people

02:12:04:04

LISA TETRAULT:

One of the things that happens too when we narrate social movements by leaders, we make it seem as if it's great people who make things happen. That it's individual great people, leaders, who make things happen, who cause change. And that can often disempower us as ordinary citizens when in fact, in the great words of Ella Baker, leaders stand on the shoulders of all of the people on the ground who make movements happen. And had it not been for all of the mobilization on the ground that these women are kind of tied in a kind of momentum and a kind of strength that these women just rode, none of these things would have been possible. Really social movements are the day-to-day activities of ordinary, everyday people. And I think we forget sometimes the power we have as individuals for change when we narrate a social movement by leaders.

Suffrage leaders and racism: Alice Paul and Ida B. Wells at the 1913 Suffrage Parade

02:12:54:03

LISA TETRAULT:

Alice Paul was steeped in a US culture that was swimming and racism and she imbibed and espoused and perpetuated much of that herself. And, again, to me, that is an instructive tale. That we have to constantly be mindful of the ways in which our activism can also be, which may seem progressive, can also be conservative and be oppressive. And that was just as true for Alice Paul as it was for any of the other suffragists. So one example of Alice that's

quite famous in Alice Paul's sort of history of conservatism and racial difficulty, is that during that massive 1913 suffrage parade, the great Ida B. Wells, journalist, anti-lynching crusader, a feminist activist, a civil rights crusader, comes in with her Illinois delegation from Chicago and plans to march with her Illinois delegation. And they're in D.C., Which is a southern city, and there are going to be southern Congress people watching this. And so Alice Paul says, "No, we can't have you march with white women, that's too controversial. We need you to march at the back of the parade." And that's one example of the ways in which Alice Paul was willing to embrace and perpetuate racism in the service of the movement. Ida B. Wells not being one to be easily cowed, she slips in and marches with the Illinois delegation as a form of protest.

Learning from the limitations of leaders

02:14:28:14

LISA TETRAULT:

So to me, we should stop heroizing Alice Paul, other suffragists. But we shouldn't throw them out because their lives are quite instructive for us about how difficult it is in this nation to mount socially progressive forces without being attentive to the question of race. It's impossible. And their lives are instructive on that front. So we have much to learn from their limitations because they are our limitations.

Complexity of women's movement

02:15:05:06

LISA TETRAULT:

The problem with the idea of a woman's movement is there is no single woman. All women are so different from each other, how do you form an agenda? Because so many women need so many different things that you focus on these five things and these three people are going to come out and say, "Well, you've left out my things and you've left out my things and you haven't foregrounded my things." So a women's rights politics is incredibly complicated because women's lives are so complicated, and women's lives are so different and varied. And so there's always infighting, but I don't think that's a reason not to struggle. It's a reason to keep reassessing. How do we build as inclusive and as liberatory a movement as we possibly can? I find hope in social movements. Like historically the ways in which social movements have been able to change and redirect and rewrite American history against all odds, is absolutely inspirational.

How stories are used to mount resistance campaigns

02:16:05:01

LISA TETRAULT:

Stories are used to mount resistance campaigns in endless ways. But one of the fundamental ways is we don't have to imagine the world the way it is, we could imagine it this other way that we're aiming for as a social movement. And that is a narrative demand. How do you get people to think the world that you're used to, that you're accustomed to over here, that you know how to describe, I want you over here. And that's a narrative leap. You have to be able to tell and write the story of the world you want to go to. And you have

to inspire people to be able to go on that journey with you and write themselves into this new understanding and new vision of the world. And so in so many ways, narrative and storytelling is so fundamental to the ability of social movements to operate, to stay together, to protest, to make themselves seen, to make themselves sustainable. It is an integral piece of social movements and we pay far too little attention to it.