

CALL FOR PAPERS

2020 BLACK HISTORY THEME: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE VOTE 105TH ANNUAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 23-27, 2020 • RENAISSANCE MONTGOMERY HOTEL & SPA • MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

ASALH's 2020 theme comes as the nation marks the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment (1920) and celebrates the sesquicentennial of the Fifteenth Amendment (1870). These constitutional amendments reshaped the American political landscape with the culmination of suffrage for women and granting black men the right to the ballot after the Civil War. The theme speaks, therefore, to the ongoing struggle on the part of both black men and black women for the right to vote.

The national discussion that centered around the struggles of African Americans and the vote has a rich and long history, which begins at the turn of the nineteenth century during the era of the Early Republic. It was here we see states passing laws that democratized the vote for white men while disfranchising free black men. Thus, even before the Civil War, black men petitioned their legislatures and the US Congress, seeking to be recognized as voters. With the conclusion of the war, states still found ways to circumvent the Constitution and prevent blacks from voting. Poll taxes, literacy tests, fraud and intimidation all turned African Americans away from the polls. Until the Supreme Court struck it down in 1915, many states used the "grandfather clause" to keep descendants of slaves out of elections. The clause said you could not vote unless your grandfather had voted – an impossibility for most people whose ancestors were slaves.

Tensions between abolitionists and women's suffragists first surfaced in the aftermath of the Civil War, while black disfranchisement laws in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries undermined the guarantees in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments for the great majority of southern blacks until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The important contribution of black suffragists occurred not only within the larger women's movement, but within the larger black voting rights movement.

The suffragist movement was not without its own issues – some suffragettes were unwilling to entertain the notion of allowing black women the right to vote. There was resentment in the suffrage movement over the 15th Amendment and the fact that black men were given the right to vote before women. This drove a considerable wedge between white suffragists like Susan B. Anthony and black suffragists like Ida B. Wells. Other suffragettes felt violence was the best way to get their point across, which led to some group members being arrested and serving jail time.

Through voting-rights campaigns and legal suits from the turn of the twentieth century to the mid-1960s, African Americans made their voices heard as to the importance of the vote. Indeed the fight for black voting rights continues in the courts today. The theme of the vote should also include the rise of black elected and appointed officials at the local and national levels, campaigns for equal rights legislation, as well as the role of blacks in traditional and alternative political parties.

The Academic Program Committee seeks a diverse slate of presenters and panels representing a variety of professional and institutional backgrounds, perspectives, and voices. We are interested in detailed, comprehensive, and descriptive proposals that outline the theme, scope, and aim of participants. The committee particularly seeks presentations that probe the traditional fields of economic, political, diplomatic, intellectual, and cultural history; the established fields of urban, race, ethnic, labor, and women's/gender history as well as southern, Appalachian, and western history; along with the rapidly expanding fields of sexuality, LGBT, and queer history; environmental and public history; African American intellectual history; carceral state studies; and transnational and global studies across all fields, topics, and thematic emphases.

We encourage proposals from scholars working across a variety of temporal, geographical, thematic, and topical areas in Black history, life and culture. We seek to foster a space of inclusion in the ASALH program and encourage submissions from anyone interested in presenting including: historians, students, new professionals, first-time presenters, activists, and practitioners from allied professions. Deadlines for submission of proposals are as follows: Submissions will be accepted up to Early Bird submission, which is March 1, 2020. After this date, the committee will accept all submissions until the deadline of April 1, 2020.

