Local Leadership in the Woman Suffrage Movement: Houston's Campaign for the Vote 1917-1918

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In November 1913, prominent Houston businessmen and politicians dressed as suffragettes cavorted on the streets of downtown Houston in a mock "suffrage parade" staged by a men's social club. The more "militant" marchers drew guns and "shot" down opponents on the street, much to the delight of the spectators.[1] How Houston woman suffrage supporters reacted to the parade is unknown, but it was clear that the local suffragists had a long way to go for the issue to be taken seriously by the people of Houston. In 1913, the suffrage issue was still a target of ridicule.

Within five years, however, Houston women won the support of the city's business establishment and major newspapers on the suffrage issue. They successfully lobbied area congressmen prior to the critical House vote on the federal amendment in January 1918. They also campaigned for and won the right to cast ballots in Texas Democratic party primary elections: 14,750 Houston women registered to vote in the July 1918 primary. By May 1919, a majority of Harris County male voters endorsed a state amendment granting women the right to vote in Texas.

What developments accounted for the turnaround in the vitality and influence of the city's suffrage movement? No account of the Houston suffrage campaign exists, and city histories offer few indications of the influence of the Houston suffrage organization or its leadership. In fact, current scholarship on the woman suffrage campaign provides few insights into the workings of *any* local organization and its impact on the wider national and state suffrage campaigns. Most suffrage studies concentrate on national leaders or state organizations. Recently, a few scholars have begun to ask questions about the influence of local organizations and the nature of

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[1]Houston *Post*, November 13, 1913.

local leadership.[2]

In Houston, as on the national and state level, many factors helped revitalize the woman suffrage campaign from 1913 to 1920. To win the vote, women dedicated themselves to political activity; they elected strong, professional organizational leaders; and they devoted additional time and resources to the national war effort in order to gain public support.

In 1913, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) began a concerted effort to have Congress pass a federal woman suffrage amendment. The suffrage bill had not received a favorable committee report in either house since 1893 and no report at all since 1896. The decision to renew the debate in Congress meant suffragists needed sharp political skills and a flair for publicity. They began their bid to grab the nation's attention with a suffrage parade the day before Woodrow Wilson's 1913 inauguration, no doubt the inspiration for Houston's mock parade later that year.

The national political campaign gathered momentum. Suffragists made pilgrimages to Washington from all over the country to present petitions gathered on the local level. Delegations of suffrage supporters met with President Wilson. The emphasis on political activity spawned the Congressional Union, which began as an affiliate of the national organization but later split with the NAWSA and adopted more militant tactics.[3] The Congressional Union's goal was to bring a federal amendment to the floor of Congress. Although the Senate defeated the bill in 1914 and the House in 1915, a powerful lesson emerged: only direct political action would force legislators to consider the suffrage issue.

The political emphasis on the national level continued with the election of Carrie Chapman Catt as NAWSA president. A veteran of New York state

[2]Two studies that discuss city suffrage activities and membership are Sharon Hartman Strom, "Leadership and Tactics in the American Woman Suffrage Movement: A New Perspective from Massachusetts," *Journal of American History* 62 (September 1975): 296-315, and Ellen C. DuBois, "Working Women, Class Relations and Suffrage Militance: Harriet Stanton Blatch and the New York Woman Suffrage Movement, 1894-1909," *Journal of American History* 74 (June 1987): 34-58. Elizabeth Hayes Turner, "White-Gloved Ladies and the 'New Women' in the Texas Woman Suffrage Movement," in Virginia Bernhard, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Theda Perdue, eds., *Southern Women: History and Identities* (Knoxville, Tenn., forthcoming) analyzes the backgrounds of Galveston suffrage officers and the relationship between local and state organizations. Another Galveston study is Larry Wygant, "'A Municipal Broom': The Woman Suffrage Campaign in Galveston, Texas," *The Houston Review* 6 (no. 3, 1984), while Janet Humphrey, *A Texas Suffragist: Diaries and Writings of Jane Y. McCallum* (Austin, 1988) documents the activities of the Austin organization. A discussion of the early Houston suffrage campaign may be found in Betty Chapman, "Annette Finnigan: Building an Enlightened Community in Houston," paper presented at the Texas State Historical Association meeting, 1989.

[3]Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass., revised edition, 1975), 271-274.

campaigns, Catt earned suffragists' respect as a strong leader with political and organizational ability. Eleanor Flexner, in her landmark study, *Century of Struggle,* writes that Catt's assumption of the presidency "marks a significant turning point."[4] Catt immediately revitalized both the national and state organizations by issuing "precise, imaginative directives regarding policy and program," including conferences between state and national leaders, training for organizers, and ideas on fundraising. She also insisted on a working slate of officers who would devote themselves full time to the demanding job of winning the vote. In Flexner's words, "The day for the amateur reformer had given way to the professional organizer."[5]

Catt, in late 1916, asked states to pledge support for a national plan to win federal amendment passage. The plan called for Southern organizations to abandon costly and bitterly frustrating state constitutional campaigns and work only for partial suffrage, such as presidential or primary voting privileges, if winning seemed a realistic possibility. Catt insisted that all states concentrate their money and efforts on the federal amendment campaign, securing votes in Congress and paving the way for ratification in the legislatures.

The Texas association, which had been reactivated in 1913, willingly accepted an active political role.[6] In 1915, Texas suffragists, representing twenty-one local societies and about 2,500 members, elected Minnie Fisher Cunningham, a politically astute campaigner, to head their organization. As president of the Galveston association, Cunningham's talents caught the attention of the state leadership, and she toured Texas in a speaking campaign for the cause. In early 1915, she helped lobby the legislature for a suffrage amendment to the state constitution. The bill came within four votes of obtaining the necessary two-thirds majority in the Texas House. Cunningham immediately began a card file on every legislator.[7]

[4]Flexner, 278.

[5]*Ibid.*, 282-283.

[6]A good general source on the state suffrage campaign is Ruthe Winegarten and Judith N. McArthur, eds., *Citizens at Last: The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas* (Austin, 1988) which reprints the valuable article, A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas," *Journal of Southern History* 17 (May 1951): 194-215, and contains excerpts from Jane Y. McCallum's chapter on Texas in Ida Husted Harper, ed., *The History of Woman Suffrage* (New York, 1922). See also Judie Walton Gammage, "Quest for Equality: An Historical Overview of Women's Rights Activism in Texas, 1890-1975" (Ph.D. dissertation, North Texas State University, 1982); Sharon E. Strawn, "Woman Suffrage: The Texas Movement, 1868-1920" (master's thesis, Hardin-Simmons University, 1982); and Anastasia Sims, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas" (senior thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1974).

[7]Taylor, in *Citizens at Last*, 27-28; John Eudy, "The Vote and Lone Star Women: Minnie Fisher Cunningham and the Texas Equal Suffrage Association," *East Texas Historical Journal* 14 (Fall 1976): 52.

Annette Finnigan on her graduation from Wellesley in 1894.

Cunningham proved to be not only a gifted organizer and lobbyist, but also a charismatic leader whose full-time devotion to the cause inspired loyalty and friendship through many months of difficult and often frustrating campaigning. Dedicated to carrying out the national campaign, she closely guided local societies according to the national plan. Under her leadership, the number of city suffrage leagues increased from twenty-one in 1915 to eighty in 1916.[8]

Among the earliest of these city organizations was Houston's suffrage club, founded in 1903 by Annette Finnigan, a Wellesley graduate and an associate of Carrie Chapman Catt's in New York. By December 1903, the league boasted 75 members and held a convention to form a state organization. The Houston women campaigned unsuccessfully to have a woman appointed to the school board. Interest in suffrage declined in 1905, when Finnigan moved back to New York.[9]

In 1912, several local societies in Texas sprang to life under the guidance of Eleanor Brackenridge of San Antonio. That same year, Annette Finnigan, who had returned to Houston in 1909, founded a new suffrage club, the Woman's Political Union. The club sent delegates to the first Texas Woman Suffrage Association convention in San Antonio in 1913. At its 1914 convention in Dallas, TWSA members elected Finnigan state president.[10] As both a local and state leader, Finnigan led the way in defining suffrage as a political issue. She questioned every Texas legislative candidate in 1914 on their position on suffrage and led a band of inexperienced suffrage lobbyists (including Cunningham) during the state legislative session of 1915. Later she recalled, "the representatives did not take us seriously."[11] In fact, many who had promised Finnigan in 1914 they would vote for suffrage, including state representative R. H. Holland of Houston, cast a "nay" vote in February 1915.[12] Nevertheless, at the TWSA state convention in Galveston three months after the defeat, Finnigan, the outgoing president, pointed proudly to the legislative work. "Our object, from the time we assumed office, has been to make the Texas Woman Suffrage Association a political office, working along political lines and in a businesslike manner."[13]

This same challenge confronted the Houston organization in late 1916

[8]Taylor, 30.

[9]Taylor, 23-25; Jane Y. McCallum, "Activities of Women in Texas Politics," in *Citizens at Last*, 203.

[10]McCallum, 204.

[11]McCallum, 204; Annette Finnigan, "Copy of Letter to Texas Woman," December 16, 1918, Jane Y. McCallum Papers, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library; Houston *Chronicle*, May 16, 1915.

[12]Houston *Press*, February 24, 1915.

[13]Houston *Chronicle*, May 16, 1915.

after Finnigan suffered a stroke and returned to New York. Finnigan's state presidency had publicized the movement in Houston. Once again, with her departure, local activity and publicity lagged. Houston women participated in state suffrage conventions in 1916 and 1917, but played no role in state leadership during those years. The local organization focused on education, with little emphasis on political work. The 1917 club, according to a Houston *Chronicle* report, planned "precinct meetings with a view of educating the people whether they want to be educated or not. Suffrage literature will be distributed, speeches made and adding to the general interest will be the coming [suffrage] school to be held in late February in the Rice Hotel."[14] The suffrage school and a speech by former NAWSA president Anna Howard Shaw in April 1917 won many Houston citizens to the cause, but few took political action. Only in late 1917 did the local organization, like the national and state bodies before them, recognize the need for competent political leadership—women who would devote full energies and talents to the lobbying, press work, letter-writing, speeches and organization necessary to galvanize local support for women's votes.

By 1917, a new type of local suffrage leader seemed to emerge in Houston—women dissatisfied with strictly educational efforts. These new spokeswomen grew impatient with the meager results of a campaign now nearly fifteen years old. They witnessed and participated in the great strides made by American women in other areas of life, especially the professions. Early Houston suffrage supporters had emerged from the club movement. Married to prominent businessmen with wealth and social position, they worked for better schools, child welfare and city public health ordinances. Examples included Mrs. Harris Masterson, a founder of the YWCA, Mrs. Presley Ewing, president of the United Mothers Clubs (forerunner of the PTA) and Mrs. W. W. Bain, secretary of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1916-17, Charlotte Teagle, the wife of an attorney, and Wilhemina Guerard, married to a Rice Institute professor of French, led the Houston Equal Suffrage Association (HESA).

Professional and working women emerged as the more vocal proponents of female enfranchisement beginning in 1917—women like attorney Hortense Ward, city librarian Julia Ideson, seamstress Eva Goldsmith of the Women's Trade Union, teacher Julia Runge, businesswoman Florence Sterling, and several local physicians. It is possible that their experience in the working world made them more vigorous in their demands for equal voting rights.[15]

[14]Houston *Chronicle*, February 4, 1917.

[15]The plight of working-class women was voiced in the suffrage campaign in Houston as early as 1914 when Eva Goldsmith spoke out in their behalf at an open-air rally. A 1915 Houston *Chronicle* editorial advocated the ballot for women as a means of obtaining better wages for working women.

For example, Julia Runge cited "equal salary for men and women who do equal work" as the reason for her support of the women's vote.[16] While they did not engage in picketing or marches associated with militant suffragists of the Northeast, these energetic new leaders differed from clubwomen in several respects: they had public speaking ability; they spoke in bold, impatient language; and they fearlessly entered the political arena, where the suffrage victory had to be won.

Hortense Ward, especially, came to the forefront as an outspoken advocate of women's rights. Well known in Houston as the first woman to pass the bar examination, she authored the Texas legislation granting married women property rights in 1913. In a study of Boston suffrage leadership, historian Sharon Hartman Strom notes the traits of the women who invigorated the campaign during its final years. Ward shared those traits: "well-educated, confident, independent, and determined to become first-class citizens." Married to an attorney, Ward had been divorced and had supported three daughters on her own for three years as a stenographer and court reporter before she became a lawyer.[17] She brought all her legal talents and powers of persuasion to bear in the campaign for the vote. Her strong leadership and name recognition helped propel the suffrage issue to the forefront in Houston.

Like many suffragists, Ward viewed the vote as a tool to achieve a more moral, enlightened American society. Most Texas suffragists favored a host of progressive reforms including a juvenile justice system, protection of women and children in the workplace, compulsory education, and public health improvements. They strongly supported prohibition of alcoholic beverages, which they believed would contribute to family stability and fewer impoverished women and children. In August 1917, Hortense Ward leaped at the chance to publicize the suffrage issue during a local option prohibition campaign. While Wilhemina Guerard, the 1917 HESA president, vacationed in Colorado, Ward formed a coalition of suffragists and clubwomen to work for prohibition.[18] She believed passionately in prohibition, but she also viewed the election as an opportunity to put the suffrage issue in the local political limelight. She invited Cunningham to speak at a rally at the City Auditorium. "Of course I want you to make a prohibition speech," she wrote Cunningham, "but I want you too to use this opportunity to remind the women how effective at this time would be the

[16]Galveston *Daily News*, February 16, 1912, as cited in Turner.

[17]Strom, 301; Sue M. Hall, "The 1925 All-Woman Supreme Court of Texas" (unpublished paper, St. Mary's University School of Law, 1978), 4, from *Texas Women: A Celebration of History* exhibit archives, Texas Woman's University Library Special Collections, Denton, Texas.

[18]Houston *Chronicle*, August 12, 1917.

Hortense Ward in 1925.

vote in their hands. You will get a chance to talk to women on suffrage that you could never get to a suffrage speech." Ward also arranged for street talks by national suffrage organizer Lavinia Engle, assigned to Texas by the NAWSA.[19]

Although Houstonians defeated the local option, Houston suffragists made valuable connections in the prohibition campaign to local politicians, businessmen, and other women's organizations. The campaign also showcased Hortense Ward's political talents. State president Cunningham relied on her for political help from the summer of 1917 to the end of the state suffrage campaign.

By 1917, Texas suffrage leaders realized that a state constitutional amendment was no closer to reality than in 1915. In August 1916 state Democrats, led by Governor Jim Ferguson, ridiculed suffragists' efforts to have the party endorse woman suffrage in its platform. Ferguson, an anti-prohibitionist, had led the minority opposition to a suffrage plank at the national Democratic convention earlier that summer and consequently became a hated symbol of Texas opposition to woman suffrage. Not surprisingly, the Ferguson-dominated 1917 legislature again defeated a suffrage bill, which fell 28 votes short of the needed two-thirds majority, considerably further from victory than the four-vote margin of 1915.[20]

State suffrage leaders pinned their hopes on a bill to grant them voting privileges in party primary elections, a measure that would require only a simple majority of both houses, not the two-thirds vote needed for a constitutional amendment. Still, they knew Governor Ferguson could veto any primary suffrage bill they managed to push through the legislature. In August and September 1917, two developments brightened the picture. In August, Ferguson resigned the governorship in the face of impeachment hearings, and Lieutenant Governor William Hobby became governor. In September, the U.S. House of Representatives created the first woman suffrage committee to consider the federal amendment. These developments injected new life into the campaign at both the state and local levels.

The Houston organization needed revitalization. It had suffered under the leadership of part-time volunteer women, and Hortense Ward began to fill the void. Guerard spent the summer in Colorado and little had been done in her absence. In September, she traveled to San Antonio to be near her husband, in military training there. In a letter to Guerard, Cunningham expressed her frustration with leadership "from the class of women who are financially able to go away during the summer and who regularly refuse to make the sacrifice of staying and devoting that time and money to the

[19]Hortense Ward, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, August 6, 1917, Minnie Fisher Cunningham Papers, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

[20]McCallum, 206.

cause."[21] Guerard typified old-style leadership. She lacked the impatience and single-minded dedication that Ward's leadership would provide. In her defense, Guerard replied, "I suppose most women are like myself—having little children and feeling the necessity of giving them the change to another climate in the summer."[22] Cunningham, who devoted all her days to the suffrage cause, away from her home and husband, had scant patience with Guerard's attitude. Moreover, Cunningham counted on Houston help in the congressional campaign. She identified Congressman Daniel Garrett of Houston as a "hopeful" and, since suffragists predicted a close vote in the House, every potential "yea" vote seemed worth any extra work.

In October 1917 Guerard gave up the presidency of the HESA to Mrs. Radoslav Tsanoff, the wife of another Rice Institute professor. Unfortunately, Tsanoff proved just as casual about her responsibilities. Guerard herself said Tsanoff "is very capable—but her inclination for the work—a little lukewarm." Ward proved much more valuable to Cunningham, providing her with the names of Houston's "five richest suffrage men" and advising her on ways to approach Congressman Garrett.[23] The Houston suffrage organization opened a permanent office and hired its first professional executive secretary, Augusta Young, in early November.[24] Long active in suffrage work in San Antonio, Young had established a working relationship with Cunningham and—most importantly—was able to devote all her time to the suffrage cause. The day of the "amateur reformer" was ending in Houston.

Young shifted the emphasis of the HESA from general community education and earnest pleas for support to systematic, organized lobbying. Suffrage leaders of 1917-18 understood that polite requests from women lacked impact. Direct demands from a politician's own friends—the influential men of the Houston community—proved much more effective. In the 1910s in Houston, these men led the numerous banks and corporations that thrived during the oil boom of 1910-20. The Texas Company, the Gulf Company, Humble Oil and Refining, and the Anderson-Clayton cotton brokerage all wielded economic and political influence.[25] To influence area

[21]Minnie Fisher Cunningham, letter to Wilhemina Guerard, September 26, 1917, Cunningham Papers.

[22]Wilhemina Guerard, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, October 1, 1917, Cunningham Papers.

[23]Minnie Fisher Cunningham, letter to Hortense Ward, October 6, 1917, Cunningham Papers; Hortense Ward, letters to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, October 8, 1917, November 9, 1917, Cunningham Papers.

[24]Houston *Press*, November 7, 1917.

[25]Joe R. Feagin, *Free Enterprise City: Houston in Political and Economic Perspective* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1988), 53-60.

congressmen, suffragists sought endorsements from many prominent businessmen, including oilmen Will Hogg and J. S. Cullinan of the Texas Company; lumber and construction magnate Jesse Jones, brother-in-law of Congressman Garrett; and John Scott, president of the First National Bank.

To Hortense Ward, voting represented legal rights, democracy and equality, but like many Southern women, she used arguments that appealed to the men in power.[26] She once commented to Cunningham, "You see, men do not really want suffrage like we do; they are doing this to please us—therefore it is not very vital with most of them."[27] But it was men they had to convince. In December 1917, Ward and Young began to marshal support for the federal amendment. The women focused on two issues important to men in power: the desire to maintain voting superiority and the desire of businessmen for government efficiency.

Fears that woman suffrage would tip the scales in favor of the Negro had fueled opposition to the women's vote since the beginning of the Texas campaign. Opponents played on these fears, linking suffrage to Negro domination and the breakdown of a separate racial social system. In 1915, Houston Representative Stanley Beard, a notorious local opponent of votes for women, claimed that if Texas gave the women the right to vote, "Negroes and whites would intermarry and children of all color would sit together in the public schools."[28] By 1917, suffrage opponents couched their arguments in less blatantly racial terms; instead they spoke of the necessity to retain "states' rights."

Houston suffragists, like most Southern advocates of the vote, avoided discussion of race.[29] Their organizational members were white, Anglo women who seemingly gave little consideration to the rights of black, Mexican-American or immigrant women. In the fall of 1917, especially, they carefully avoided confronting the racial issue. Tensions between the races

[26]For a discussion of the issues unique to the Southern suffrage movement, see Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago, 1970), Chapter 7; Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement 1890-1920* (New York, 1965), Chapter 7; Flexner, 313-318; and Kenneth R. Johnson, "Kate Gordon and the Woman Suffrage Movement in the South," *Journal of Southern History* 38 (1972): 365-92.

[27]Hortense Ward, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, November 9, 1917, Cunningham Papers.

[28]Houston *Chronicle*, February 24, 1915.

[29]National suffragists also avoided the racial issue for fear of alienating Southern congressmen. Ida Husted Harper of the NAWSA wrote a black women's organization: "Many of the Southern members [of Congress] are now willing to surrender their beloved doctrine of States' rights and their only obstacle is fear of the colored women's vote, in the States where it is likely to equal or exceed the white women's vote. It has been the policy of the leaders of the [NAWSA] to meet this foreboding with silence." Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York, 1984), 161-162.

ran high after an August riot by black soldiers at the city's army camp, Camp Logan. Instead of directly addressing the charge of black voting supremacy, suffragists used racial prejudices to their advantage. Educated white women, they maintained, could offset the votes of the ignorant masses—Negroes, German aliens, Mexicans or illiterate whites.[30] Thus, by giving women the vote, white Anglo men would ensure their voting and social superiority. Advocates of woman suffrage focused particularly on the danger of the alien vote during wartime. Under an 1895 Texas constitutional amendment, alien males could vote if they applied for citizenship at least six months before an election.[31]

In a strongly worded newspaper article, Hortense Ward pointed out that German citizens, "alien enemies," could vote to elect congressmen while "loyal American women" could not. Augusta Young wrote oilman J. S. Cullinan that women could achieve suffrage in one of two ways: "One is by asking the consent of every man in the United States, including illiterate Mexicans voting on first intention papers, and Negroes, to whom the appeal must be made, to raise the white woman to his political level—The other is by Federal Amendment . . . The Indian, the Negro, the Alien, has been enfranchised by federal act—Why make us women take the long hard way 'round?" The suffragists also appealed to businessmen's admiration of efficient operation. The federal route, they argued, offered the quickest, least costly way to award women the vote. "Doesn't it seem economically unsound to waste our time and your money [on state suffrage campaigns] toward an end that is as inevitable as taxes?" Young argued. "Think of the money and energy wasted in conducting elections like the recent one in New York," Ward wrote. "In this day of economy, why not eliminate the waste?"[32]

At Ward's urging, the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce, the Young Men's Business League and the county judge sent wires of support to Houston's congressmen. Young secured the signatures of "a long list of influential men" on a national petition sent to the congressional committee

[30]Texas suffragists had ample reasons to believe that few black women would vote after woman suffrage was granted. In Texas, blacks were excluded from the Democratic Party, thus shut out of decisive primary elections. State and city poll taxes further limited black voting. Suffragists themselves supported state laws requiring citizenship and literacy tests "to protect the purity of the ballot." Alluding to these and other restrictive practices, the Houston *Chronicle* allayed white fears during the debate over the federal amendment, noting in an editorial on December 30, 1917: "The same moral influence that prevents the negro man from gaining control of political matters can, and will, serve a similar purpose with respect to the negro woman."

[31]Gammage, 62.

[32]Augusta Young, letter to J. S. Cullinan, December 14, 1917, J. S. Cullinan Papers, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library; Hortense Ward, "Women Demand the Vote as a War Measure," undated newspaper clipping, Cunningham Papers.

on woman suffrage. Many men had long endorsed woman suffrage, but balked at supporting a federal amendment because of "states' rights" concerns. Will Hogg, millionaire oilman and philanthropist, son of the former Governor James S. Hogg, hesitated when Young asked for his signature, then finally blurted out, "Well, I want to see the women get suffrage so much. I don't care how it comes. Put me down for it."[33]

Oilman Cullinan, a founder of the Texas Company, served on the advisory board of the Houston Equal Suffrage Association in 1917, but believed suffrage should not be a federal concern, especially during time of war. Young wrote back in forceful language that women wanted the vote, partly in order to "better discharge the heavy responsibilities that are increasingly theirs because of war conditions. . .If we are to do the work of men, we must have the same equipment, and by the quickest route—federal amendment." Young won Cullinan's backing—and he wired his support to his friend Representative Joe Eagle.[34]

Cullinan failed to change Eagle's adamant opposition to woman suffrage, but the women scored a major victory in securing the last-minute favorable vote from Congressman Garrett. They kept up a steady stream of letters and telegrams to Garrett in the days before the crucial House vote January 10, 1918. When the vote was taken, the Susan B. Anthony amendment passed by exactly the two-thirds majority necessary for passage. For the first time since it was introduced nearly fifty years earlier, a house of Congress had voted favorably on the woman suffrage amendment.

The Houston suffragists wasted no time in outlining the next stage of the campaign. Ward wanted Cunningham to push for primary suffrage in the anticipated special session of the Texas legislature. She also suggested convincing the friendly newspapers of the state to push for changes in the Texas primary election law "without it appearing to come from us."[35] Although Ward still served only as a board member of the Houston association, Young called her my "chief local advisor—she's so well informed, safe, and businesslike." In mid-January 1918 the HESA board elected Ward president. "This assures us a business administration," Young wrote Cunningham. The state president characterized Ward as "a woman of very keen political perception," a suffragist "who has been firm in the faith

[33]Hortense Ward, letters to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, December 14, 1917, December 22, 1917, Cunningham Papers; Augusta Young, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, December 22, 1917, Cunningham Papers.

[34]J. S. Cullinan, letter to Augusta Young, December 28, 1917, Cullinan Papers; Augusta Young, letter to J. S. Cullinan, January 2, 1918, Cullinan Papers.

[35]Hortense Ward, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, January 10, 1918, Cunningham Papers.

from the beginning, and who is not hampered by any States' Rights nonsense."[36]

Within a week, Ward launched city ward and precinct organization and organized a series of conferences to plan "our war service program and the final drive for winding up of suffrage work in Texas."[37] Ward's confidence stemmed from the bright prospects for winning primary suffrage in the special session of the Texas legislature now that Ferguson no longer occupied the governor's office. Ward spent a month in Austin with the state suffrage organization calling on Hobby, interviewing legislators and following the progress of the bill. Hobby voiced his support but would not personally submit the bill until the women presented a petition signed by the majority of the members of both House and Senate! The women dutifully gathered the signatures, and the bill passed both houses by large majorities. Even after its passage, Hobby delayed signing for five days.[38] In a rare reference to the racial issue, Hortense Ward summed up the opposition she encountered in Austin: "They were living in the past, listening to the rattle of the drums of the civil war. The world, whirling on, has simply run away from some of them, and left them groping in the past."[39]

Back in Houston, Ward wrote Cunningham in relief, "The whole thing is like a dream now. I can hardly realize that the work is done. That we are really and truly voters. I do hope that the women get busy and realize all it means."[40] Ward knew better than anyone that the work was far from done. A campaign to educate and register women voters loomed ahead, and Texas women had pledged to continue work on the federal woman suffrage amendment. The U.S. Senate fight was a long, bitter one, with victory not coming until June 1919. But suffragists had still another task at hand: "war work."

When the United States entered the European war in April 1917, American suffragists faced the task of keeping the suffrage issue alive in a country preoccupied with war events in Europe. They also had to avoid the accusation that the suffrage campaign would distract women from their work supporting America's fighting men. The NAWSA pledged its support to the war effort as early as February 1917, hoping to gain political support

[36]Augusta Young, letters to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, January 11, 1918, and January 15, 1918, Cunningham Papers; Minnie Fisher Cunningham, letter to Mrs. George Bass, Democratic National Committee, January 26, 1918, Cunningham Papers.

[37]Hortense Ward, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, January 18, 1918, Cunningham Papers; Hortense Ward, letter to J. S. Cullinan, January 31, 1918, Cullinan Papers.

[38]McCallum, 213.

[39]Hortense Ward, unidentified newspaper clipping, March 27, 1918, Cunningham Papers.

[40]Hortense Ward, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, March 25, 1918, Cunningham Papers.

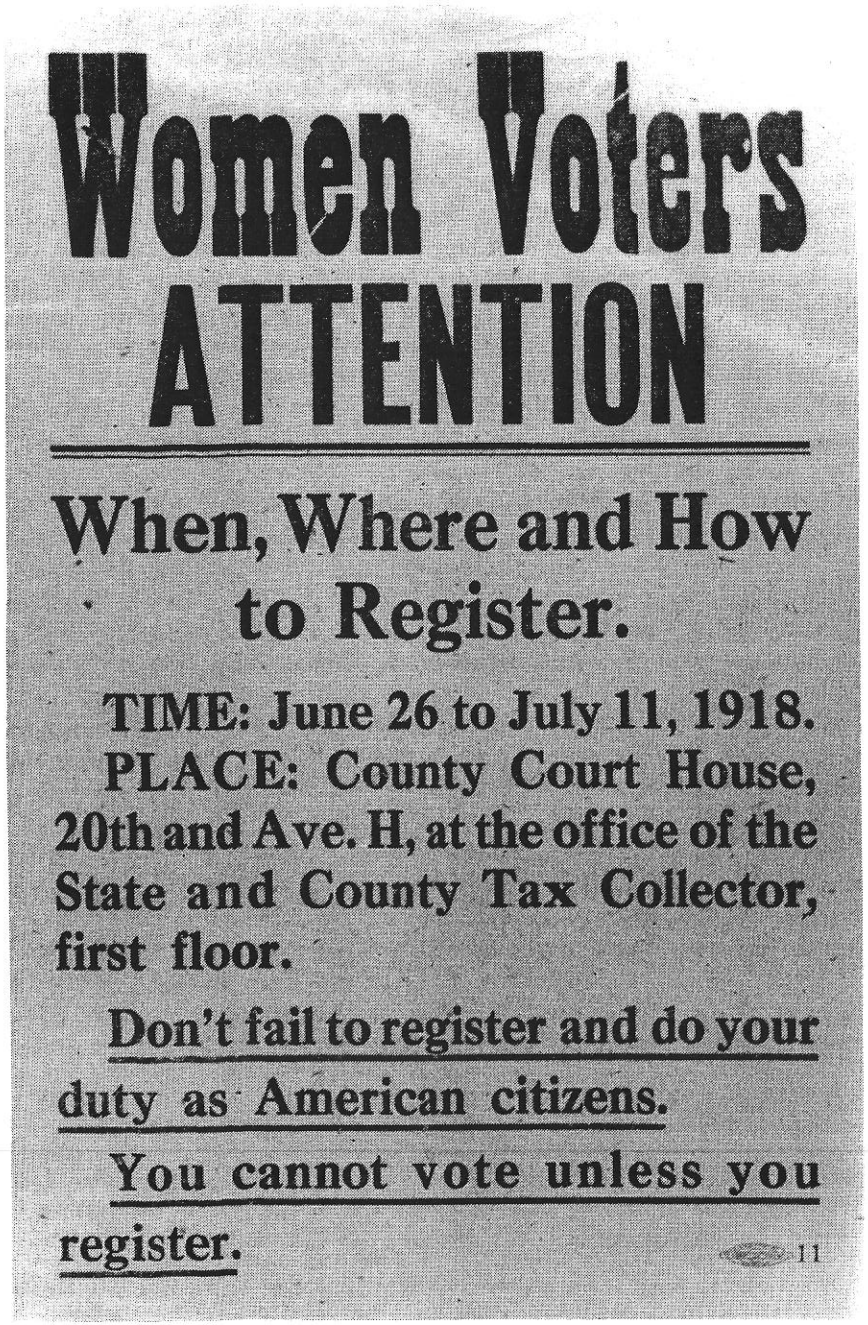
for its stand during and after the war. The National Woman's Party, the organizational outgrowth of the Congressional Union, refused to support the war effort until women were enfranchised. Its members, who regularly picketed the White House, drew strong criticism from veterans and patriotic groups. Texas suffragists followed the NAWSA lead, leading local efforts in food conservation, sales of war bonds and service to the men at local army camps. And they, like the national leaders, used the war issue to appeal to America's sense of justice. If we are fighting for democracy abroad, they argued, how can we deny the basic right of democracy to half the population here at home? The women took pains to disassociate themselves from the "picketers" of the National Woman's Party whom the local press regularly lambasted for their anti-war stand. A National Woman's Party chapter was organized in Houston in 1916 and several Houston activists were NWP members, including Florence Sterling and Texas Farm Women President Benigna Kalb. But there is no evidence that the local women adopted the national party's anti-war stand.[41]

Houston suffragists served as neighborhood chairmen in a food conservation education drive in the summer of 1917, and the suffrage association distributed cabbage and potato plants for "victory gardens." In the midst of the congressional campaign, Hortense Ward taught classes on rolling bandages, and sent sweaters and coats to soldiers at Texas camps. Augusta Young bristled at Cullinan's suggestion that suffragists somehow impeded the war effort. "We are knitting while we talk," she wrote back. "We are by no means working for suffrage *instead* of war relief, as evidenced by the assistance we have rendered Liberty Loan Campaigns, and other patriotic movements." The night she heard the news of the historic U.S. House vote on suffrage, Young was working at an army canteen.[42]

In the spring of 1918, Ward, Julia Ideson and Lavinia Engle rode in a "Liberty Loan Limited" touring car driven by Mrs. R. L. Young, HESA first vice president, to Wharton, Victoria, Cuero, Seguin, and other South Texas towns drumming up sales of liberty bonds. In Houston, about 300 suffrage workers canvassed for the bond drive and motored to towns in Harris County such as Crosby, Goose Creek and Humble in the fundraising effort. "They have laid aside campaigning and politics for several weeks and are giving

[41]Jacqueline Van Voris, *Carrie Chapman Catt: A Public Life* (New York, 1987), 145; Taylor, 35; Gammage, 47.

[42]Houston *Chronicle*, June 6, 1917; "Report of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association, September 1, 1917, to November 1, 1917," Cunningham Papers, as published in *Citizens at Last*, 154; Hortense Ward, letters to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, November 9, 1917, and December 14, 1917, Cunningham Papers; Augusta Young, letter to J. S. Cullinan, January 2, 1918, Cullinan Papers; Augusta Young, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, January 11, 1918, Cunningham Papers.



Women Voters
ATTENTION

When, Where and How to Register.

TIME: June 26 to July 11, 1918.
PLACE: County Court House, 20th and Ave. H, at the office of the State and County Tax Collector, first floor.

Don't fail to register and do your duty as American citizens.

You cannot vote unless you register.

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their time exclusively during the liberty loan drive toward helping oversubscribe Texas's quota," a Houston *Post* writer noted.[43]

In fact, the suffragists did their best to keep a high profile in the community and in the newspapers. They staffed an Equal Suffrage Liberty Loan booth at the Rice Hotel for a week in April 1918 and raised $177,500 in bonds, including purchases from their own members and sizeable corporate contributions. The HESA raised more than its $250,000 pledge during the spring campaign. By the end of the war, the Equal Suffrage Association had raised $2,339,000 of the $12 million in bonds sold in Harris County. In addition, suffragists went house to house soliciting contributions for United War Work and the Red Cross and operated a war savings bank.[44]

The political work continued as well. The HESA distributed to state newspapers an article by Hortense Ward giving detailed instructions to women on registering and preparing a ballot in the upcoming Democratic primary. Later the HESA printed and distributed 40,000 flyers, "Instructions for Women Voters."[45] Suffragists were determined to prove to the state and the nation that women would use the vote. To state suffragists, the reelection of William Hobby seemed equally crucial. Their old nemesis, Jim Ferguson, had declared himself a candidate for governor in the July primary. His election would hurt the chances for full state suffrage, ratification of federal suffrage, and other progressive measures, including prohibition.

As chairman of the Hobby women's executive committee in Harris County, Ward urged women across the state to form "Hobby Clubs." She wrote to a suffrage leader in Texas City: "I need not remind you of Mr. Ferguson's attitude on all legislation pertaining to women, and especially of his attitude on the Suffrage." Cunningham expected Ferguson to get the German vote, "the Mexican vote, and the corruptible white vote, the ignorant white vote," and possibly the labor vote. Suffragists believed only the new women voters could counteract that influence. Voting was their duty, Ward told the women of the state, since "so many of the men who have stood for the best in governmental affairs have become disfranchised by reason of their entrance into the service of the United States army."[46]

[43] Houston *Post*, April 14, 1918.

[44] Houston *Chronicle*, April 14, 1918; Hortense Ward, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 4, 1918, Cunningham Papers; *The Woman Citizen*, January 4, 1919, clipping in Cunningham Papers.

[45] Ft. Worth *Record*, May 12, 1918; Houston *Post*, May 3, 1918; Hortense Ward, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, March 25, 1918, Cunningham Papers; *The Woman Citizen*, January 4, 1919, clipping in Cunningham Papers.

[46] Hortense Ward, "To the Women of Texas," May 15, 1918, flyer, Woman Suffrage Pamphlet Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library; Hortense Ward, letter to Mrs. J. M. Quinn, May 16, 1918, Cunningham Papers; Minnie Fisher Cunningham, letter to Carrie Chapman Catt, Cunningham Papers; Houston *Post*, May 3, 1918.

The women had only seventeen days to register, according to the provisions of the primary suffrage law—from June 26 until July 12. At 8 a.m. on June 26, Hortense Ward stood first in line at the Harris County Courthouse. In the hallway in front of the tax collector's office, she became the first Harris County woman to register to vote. By closing time that day, 466 women had registered. In seventeen days, 14,750 Harris County women registered, well over the 10,000 Ward had predicted to a local reporter. In the month before the election, the suffrage association maintained offices in the courthouse. On a large blackboard, the women displayed the records of the various candidates for office. Statewide, the Houston organization was given major credit for Hobby's primary win by a margin of 244,467 votes.[47]

Hobby's reelection and Ferguson's defeat represented a victory for both supporters of woman suffrage and prohibitionists. Once voters turned back Ferguson's bid for a comeback, the prohibition and suffrage forces had enough combined strength to turn the tide in the state Democratic Party. In September, the women won easily what had seemed an impossibility just two years earlier: state Democratic endorsement of both the state and federal woman suffrage constitutional amendments.[48]

For her statewide role in the election, political leaders mentioned Hortense Ward as a candidate for Secretary of State, and for appointment to the state commission on appeals to advise the Supreme Court. Governor Hobby eventually appointed her secretary of the industrial accident board, where she championed laws protecting women and children. She later served on the State Advisory Board of the U.S. Employment Service. In December 1918 prohibition leaders named Ward to the committee drawing up the prohibition amendment submitted to the 1919 legislature.[49]

Texas suffrage leaders opposed submitting a suffrage amendment in 1919. They expected the federal amendment to finally win passage in the U.S. Senate, and they felt confident the legislature would ratify it. A popular vote rejection of the state amendment could hurt their cause. There are indications that this debate over the federal versus the state route in early 1919 caused tension in the Houston organization. Following the national lead, the Texas Equal Suffrage Association opposed spending time and depleted resources on an expensive popular vote campaign, when victory on the federal level seemed near. But for some veterans of the long fight for a state amendment, it seemed cruel to deny them the chance for a Texas

[47]Houston *Post*, June 28, 1986, reprint of June 28, 1918, article; *The Woman Citizen*, January 4, 1919, clipping in Cunningham Papers; McCallum, 215.

[48]Taylor, 38.

[49]Augusta Young, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, July 13, 1918, Cunningham Papers; unidentified newspaper clipping, August 30, 1918, Cunningham Papers; Dallas *Times Herald*, May 15, 1919; *The Woman Citizen*, January 4, 1919, clipping in Cunningham Papers.

suffrage law now that the legislature seemed willing to submit it to the people of Texas. The state supporters won out. The anti-Ferguson, prohibition legislature of 1919 acknowledged the pivotal woman's vote and passed a proposed constitutional amendment granting women the vote in all state elections. The legislature scheduled a referendum for May 24, 1919.

The Houston organization launched another round of fundraising, canvassing and campaigning throughout the county. Workers walked house to house to secure names for a statewide petition and poll those for and against the amendment. By now, they had the support of all county newspapers, including the newly converted *Post*. State leaders asked Hortense Ward, as a leader with statewide name recognition, to speak at rallies in Dallas and Fort Worth on behalf of the amendment.[50]

Harris County voted favorably on woman suffrage, 7,690 to 6,893. The county also narrowly approved the prohibition amendment 6,433 to 6,107, a turnaround from the local option election just two years earlier.[51] The prohibition measure passed statewide, but voters rejected the suffrage proposal. Eleven days later, however, on June 4, 1919, the U.S. Senate finally passed the woman suffrage amendment and sent it to the states for ratification. As Texas suffragists predicted, ratification came easily in the legislature despite the last diehard objections of Houston state Senator R. M. Johnston.[52] On June 27, 1919, Texas became the first Southern state to ratify the federal amendment. The following year, three-fourths of the states had ratified and woman suffrage became federal law.

Full suffrage for women citizens became a reality only after a long campaign waged on many levels. The history of the campaign for the vote must include an account of the impact of city activities and the contributions of the leaders who emerged from these local societies. Local organizations gathered petitions at the grassroots level, conveyed community sentiment to state and national legislators, furnished press stories to major newspapers, raised money for state and national associations, and sponsored speeches to rally and educate the community. In general, they defined suffrage as a local issue, vital to local women with ties to community interests, not just to vocal outsiders in Austin or Washington, D.C. In the congressional fight, linking suffrage to local interests proved especially crucial to the cause. Southern congressmen had to be convinced that they were responding to the wishes of their supporters back home, not to agitators in the capital. The local suffrage organizations "lit the fire" under their representatives and senators.

[50]Houston *Chronicle*, May 14, 1919; Augusta Young, letter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, March 31, 1919, Cunningham Papers; Dallas *Times Herald*, May 15, 1919.

[51]Secretary of State Record Group Election Results, Archives Division, Texas State Library, as published in *Citizens at Last*, 189; David McComb, *Houston: A History* (Austin, 1969), 107.

[52]McCallum, 219.

Houston women successfully kept the pressure on Congressman Garrett and Senator Charles Culberson, who both came through with crucial "aye" votes.

The effectiveness of the local organization in Houston can also be attributed to the type of leadership that emerged when political action was sorely needed. Augusta Young provided the organizational skills, the full-time devotion, and the business methods to run a growing organization. Hortense Ward and, to a lesser degree, Julia Ideson, Eva Goldsmith, Julia Runge, and Florence Sterling, provided the speaking skills, the professional experience, the political know-how, the fiery enthusiasm and impatience to give the community a sense of urgency on the issue. Ward's outspokenness, name recognition, and legal and writing skills contributed significantly on the state level as well, as demonstrated by her Austin lobbying, voter education literature, and persuasive wartime news articles.

The Houston experience suggests that the suffrage movement, whose leaders are usually described as "middle class," was more varied in its makeup. In Houston, the suffrage movement attracted many types: women from the elite class, those married to professionals and upper-level managers, professional women with careers of their own and even women involved in the trade union movement. They formed links to different groups in the local community in their campaign for the vote. The professionals, with experience in the working world and a taste for political activism, assumed leadership in the final push for the vote. To make their mark in the political world, to take on Ferguson and win, as Minnie Fisher Cunningham later commented, called for "the best politicians of the day."

Black Houstonians and the "Separate But Equal" Doctrine: Carter W. Wesley Versus Lulu B. White

Merline Pitre

Ironic as it may have appeared in the late 1940s and early 1950s, two of Houston's most popular black personalities engaged in continuous warfare over the "separate but equal" doctrine in education. Indeed, the feud between Lulu Bell White, executive secretary of the NAACP, and Carter W. Wesley, editor of the *Houston Informer*, lasted from 1945 to 1957. What seems most baffling is that White and Wesley possessed similar personalities, philosophies, and personal styles and drew their support from similar constituencies. Both were flamboyant, crowd-pleasing prima donnas, who used their theatrical skills to hold center stage. Both stressed independence, sought coalitions, and challenged the white establishment. Moreover, White and Wesley championed the powerless racial and ethnic groups from which they themselves sprang. Their liberal concerns intersected most pointedly on the issue of the integration of the University of Texas vis-a-vis the establishment of Texas Southern University. Yet the feud occurred partly *because* of their similarities, and partly because of the political context from which each individual emerged.

Personal experiences fostered Wesley's commitment to social justice. Born in Houston in 1892, Wesley graduated from the public schools of the city, attended Fisk University, and went on during World War I to become one of the first black officers in the United States military. Upon his return, he pursued and earned a doctorate in jurisprudence from Northwestern University. After four years of legal practice in Oklahoma, Wesley returned to Houston in 1927.[1] Finding his legal practice in Texas limited because of

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[1] Nancy Ruth Bessent, "The Publisher: A Biography of Carter W. Wesley" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1981), 27.