

Drawing for Suffrage

Political Imagery in the Fight for Enfranchising Women in  
Britain

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Individual Website

Student-composed Words: 1,200

Process Paper: 499 words

After hearing 2020's theme, Breaking Barriers in History, I immediately knew I wanted to research women breaking barriers in their community. After spending months brainstorming, I settled on imagery in the British women's suffrage movement.

I began my research by looking up key terms, people, and events defining the women's suffrage movement. I came across cartoons and began to look into organizations such as ASL and SA, working under NUWSS and WSPU. On multiple occasions, I came across a general theme in sources claiming imagery from the movement was not extensively researched because it was either too political for art historians or too artistic for political historians. However after *The Spectacle of Women* (Lisa Tickner 1980) was published, more research in the field of my topic was performed. I conducted an interview with Barbara Berenson, former senior attorney for the MA District Court, who wrote a book on suffrage in MA. This interview helped me understand why it is important to acknowledge the fight for women's suffrage. I then sorted my research into different types of barriers and organized my website pages.

I decided to do a website because the primary aspect of my project is the imagery from the movement. Prior to making this decision, I hoped to write a paper which would include appendices however I realized that would not do justice to the potential this topic presents. I organized the multitude of images based on their purpose as a means to break societal barriers or a method of constituting political change. After completing research on the body of my website, I looked at political imagery today and included examples of degrading illustrations targeting female activists and politicians. I added an audio clip from my interview as well as other media which enhanced my website, including a radio broadcast and a video from the LSE Library. I

chose a color scheme of white, green, red, and purple because those colors were representative of the movement.

The barriers in my topic are both specific societal barriers that art countered and general forces of opposition denying women the vote. Political imagery fought attitude barriers confining women to undermining definitions. Women were told to stay in the house because they were inferior to men, both intellectually and physically. Forces of opposition denying women equality, such as The Reform Act of 1832, the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage, the Anti-Suffrage League, and members of Parliament led to a gender barrier in society. Through my research, I understood that the pro-suffrage imagery served as a conduit for change and breaking down that barrier. The takeaway from this project is recognizing that voting is a sacred right often taken for granted. Our next step in the world hopefully works toward breaking barriers that hold back women from voting in Middle Eastern and African countries. Political cartoons and imagery play a defining role in politics today and will hopefully constitute political action that breaks down barriers in the present and in the future.