

Accompanying Label Content for Virtual Tour of Respect the Dress: Clothing and Activism In U.S. Women’s History

Section I: Introduction

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. the Dress: Clothing and Activism in U.S. Women’s History

The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. It took many decades for advocates to reach the successful passage of federal-level suffrage for women in the United States. In the century that followed, challenges toward women’s right to vote, to hold office, and to participate fully and completely in American society remain. Advocates for and against women’s expanded rights have used clothing to define or support their mission.

From bloomer costumes to bra burning, the story of women’s rights activism in the United States is filled with references to how women dress. Radical fashion choices are often given as examples revealing the equally radical behaviors of activists. Yet few women adopted the dress reform style known as bloomers in the 1850s or burned their bras during the women’s liberation movement protests in the 1970s.

The 19th Amendment legally prohibited voter discrimination based on sex. Suffragists, the name U.S. activists advocating for women’s voting rights called themselves, played on and influenced the 1910s fashion for white lacy dresses, allowing them to express affiliation with women’s rights advocacy while also maintaining a less radical choice in dress. Suffragists used the three colors of white, purple, and yellow for sashes, buttons, and flags. Feminists in the 1970s and in the new millennium continue to wear these colors as a signal of support to earlier activists.

Whether they chose to be in or out of step with the fashions of their day, women’s rights activists have consistently demanded that they be respected as citizens and as humans, including in how they dress.

Graphic for Intro Label



*ERA demonstration
Washington, D.C., by Bettye
Lane, 1978
Schlesinger Library on the
History of Women in America,
Radcliffe Institute, Harvard
Library*

Questions for the Portrait of Sarah Gilmor. (Pictured Below)

Take a moment to look closely at this 1823 portrait of Sarah Reeve Ladson Gilmor.

Based on this portrait, who do you think Sarah Gilmor was in society?

What garments is she wearing and what do you think they are made from?

How is she posed in the painting?

Sarah Gilmor Portrait



*Mrs. Robert Gilmor, Jr. (Sarah Reeve Ladson, c. 1790-1866), by Thomas Sully, Oil on canvas, 1823
Gibbes Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. Leila Ladson Jones, 1942.10.3*

Analysis of Sarah Gilmor Portrait

American painter Thomas Sully created this portrait of Sarah Gilmor in 1823. He was known in for his ability to convey the cultural styles of the early national period in U.S. history, including popular fashions for men and women. Sarah Gilmor wears a white gown with an empire waistline and a delicate gauze collar. A long green silk jacket called a pelisse is trimmed in ermine fur, and a striped silk shawl draped around her shoulders cascades down below the bottom of the painting. She wears a turban styled headpiece made from a fabric known as madras plaid, which is named for

the area in India where it originated. In addition to her fashionable clothing, Gilmor's porcelain white skin with rosy cheeks and lips also reflect idealized feminine beauty of her time.

Gilmor's fine white muslin dress, lavish silk and fur pelisse, and colorful madras turban are all reflections of her husband Robert's business dealings as the owner of an East India trading company. When her portrait was displayed in their home, her image was used to represent his wealth and success. Delicacy and refinement were qualities that defined womanhood at a time when notions of what it meant to be

American were still being determined in the new nation. Sarah Gilmore's portrait and the fashion choices she made are a reflection of the political, economic, and nationalistic desires of the young United States.

Section II: Before

Early Activists

The origin of the U.S. women's rights movement and the fight for women's suffrage is often referenced as the Seneca Falls Convention of July 1848. This gathering of approximately 300 supporters of women's rights was held in New York and included women and men who proposed ways to proceed with their cause. The convention attendees wrote a document published as the Declaration of Sentiments. It was signed by 68 women and 32 men, and was quickly published and disseminated in various newspapers across the country. Much of the content was modeled after the Declaration of Independence to mock the earlier document's failure to provide equal independence for all, including a list of grievances held by American women against their oppressors. The first one read: "He has not ever permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise." The inclusion of the right to vote in the Declaration of Sentiments was a hotly debated issue at the convention, but it is ultimately seen as the first time an organized group came together to demand suffrage for American women in writing.

The organizing activities of women's rights activists in the early 1800s were in direct challenge to the popular belief known as the "cult of domesticity." This cultural ideal placed women in the private sphere of the home, where they were to fulfill their duties as wives, mothers, and managers of domestic life while their husbands represented their concerns and thoughts in the public sphere outside the home. Gathering publicly, speaking to large crowds, and publishing information about the political rights of women were not acceptable social behaviors in this cultural ideal. However, many women activists came from families of prominent social standing, and they leveraged this status for their cause, including careful attention to modest but still stylish clothing.

Fashions during the era of the cult of domesticity separated women physically in public spaces, such as limiting who could see their faces when they wore bonnets like the brown one in this case. In this painting the woman is admiring the purchase of a new bonnet while her parents look in shock at the price on the receipt. Women walked a fine line balancing being respectable in appearance by following the latest fashions, but in also being fiscally responsible with the family's finances.

Graphic for Early Activist Label



Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Brown bonnet, 1840s
Donated by Betsy Gill,
2004.196a

The New Bonnet, by Francis William Edmonds, Oil on canvas, 1858

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Erving Wolf Foundation Gift and Gift of Hanson K. Corning, by exchange, 1975.27.1

Organizing for Freedom

The people who attended the Seneca Falls Convention, and who wrote and signed the Declaration of Sentiments, did not suddenly appear in 1848. Many were involved in other social justice initiatives for decades prior to the meeting. Perhaps the largest common cause was that of the anti-slavery and abolition movement. Black and white women and men organized, petitioned, and resisted the system of chattel slavery prevalent in the United States since the country's founding. The quilt block in this case was cut from a larger signature quilt, signed by members of a Quaker community in 1842. This one includes a quote from Psalm 119:134 of the Christian Bible: "Deliver me from the oppression of man." Versions of the "kneeling slave" abolitionist print depicting a man or a woman circulated widely, casting enslaved people as helpless and in need of saving despite the millions of enslaved men and women who liberated themselves, several of whom went on to lead anti-slavery organizations. Abolitionists held craft fairs frequently where they sold small handmade gift items featuring anti-slavery imagery and sayings. The money they raised supported their organizations, sometimes including financial support for those attempting to or recently escaped from slavery.

Another social justice initiative that informed the emerging focus on women's suffrage came from the rapidly growing textile industry, as women working in these new factories began to organize and fight with mill owners for worker protections including better wages and shorter days. Workers at the Lowell Mill in Massachusetts held organized strikes in 1834 and 1836, and formed the first female labor union in the United States in 1845. The Lowell mill workers published writings mocking the founding documents of the country for failing to uphold the promise of independence like the Declaration of Sentiments written three years later. When mill workers published in pro-union newspapers like the

Voice of Industry or stood in front of crowds to give public speeches in the name of social justice, they were dismissed as foolish, dangerous, and unwomanly.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Quilt block, 1842

Donated by Pat L. Nickols, 2016.48.5r

Loom shuttles, mid-1800s

Donated by George and Thomas Monsson, 2016.25.1-.2

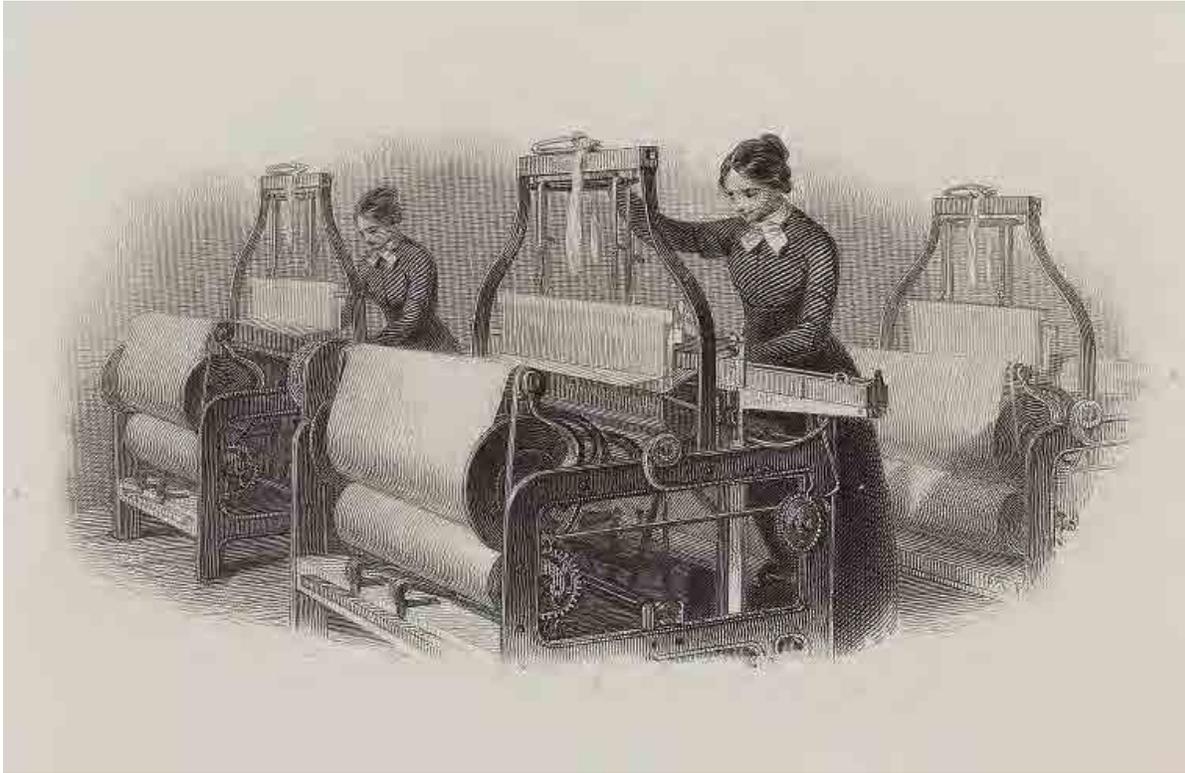
Graphic 1 from Organizing Freedom Label



Am I not a woman and a sister?, 1837

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, New York Public Library

Graphic 2 for Organizing Freedom Label



Lowell girls, 1800-1899

The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs: Print Collection, New York Public Library

Comfort or Cage Crinolines

The cage crinoline or hoop skirt silhouette fashionable in the 1850s and early 1860s physically separated women's bodies when out in public. Such styles limited women's movements, and some believed that corsets and heavy skirts and petticoats contributed to physical ailments. A dress reform movement arose in the 1850s related to improving women's health by allowing increased physical movement through less restrictive clothing. Loose or no corset and blousy trousers worn with shorter but still quite full skirts became the most popular ensemble. The name "bloomer costume" came from an advocate and adherent, Amelia Bloomer (1818-1894), who was involved in several social reform movements of the time in addition to women's suffrage. Negative responses resulted in this being a short-lived and largely unsuccessful attempt to change the dominant fashionable clothing for women at the time.

This striped silk bodice and matching skirt are not drastically different in silhouette from the bloomer ensemble depicted in this lithographic print. The sloping shoulders and relatively fitted bodice are similar on the top half of the body. The short skirt worn over the bloomers, which were also called Turkish trousers by dress reform adherents, still comes out from the body a significant amount. It is, however, less restrictive than the sweeping, floor-length silk skirt that was the height of fashion in this

decade. Layers of petticoats worn over the trousers but underneath the skirt caused its fullness rather than the cumbersome cage crinoline required of the striped silk ensemble.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Gray striped bodice and skirt, 1850s

Donated by Esther T. Cornell, 2012.109ab

Graphic 1 for Comfort or Cage Crinolines Label



ENGRAVED BY H. CORNELL. Scanned according to the original in the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Digitized by the Internet Archive. See http://www.archive.org/details/nypl-dig-pga-06193

THE BLOOMER COSTUME.

The Bloomer Costume,
by N. Currier, 1851
Library of Congress,
Prints & Photographs
Division, LC-DIG-pga-
06193

Graphic 2 for Comfort or Cage Crinolines Label



Godey's Paris Fashions Americanised, by Joseph Ives Pease, 1849
The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs: Print Collection, New York Public Library

A National War

The American Civil War (1861-1865) caused great upheaval, leaving thousands of women grieving from the many deaths caused by the war. Mourning clothing was already a popular social custom in the Victorian era. It involved a careful set of guidelines to be followed in how grieving family and friends should dress depending on their relation to the deceased. These were most restrictive for widows. Black and shades of purple were important markers noting how someone was related and how long the person had been dead. This black jacket also shows the influence of men's military uniforms on women's fashion through the use of ribbons and button placement.

Women served as nurses during the Civil War, leaving their families behind to work in hospitals and on battlefields. In the South, women found their homes invaded or destroyed, and many were displaced

either by their own choice to migrate or, for many enslaved people, on forced marches further from the reach of ever-encroaching U.S. troops. Large numbers of enslaved people also emancipated themselves in the midst of wartime chaos.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Black jacket, 1860s

Donated by Judy Graese, 2018.26.11

Purple shot silk skirt,

Donated by Carolyn Ostertag, 1973.3.7b

Graphic for A National War Label



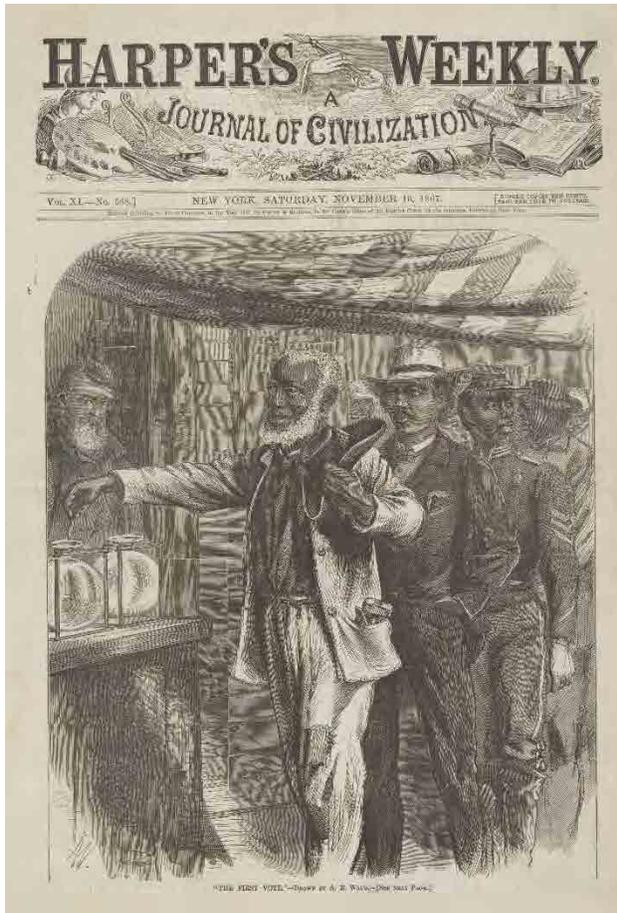
Fredericksburg, Va. Nurses and officers of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, 1864
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-cwpb-01196

The 15th Amendment turns 150

As the nation grieved the Civil War dead, it also celebrated the legal ending of slavery in the country with ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865. Earlier efforts by women's suffrage advocates to gain the vote joined and conflicted with efforts seeking suffrage for African American men and women, reaching a fever pitch in the years immediately following the war. Many women's suffrage advocates chose to support women's suffrage over black suffrage. Others sought a federal avenue guaranteeing voting access protections for race and gender, not one or the other. In the end, the 15th Amendment, ratified 150 years ago in 1870, gave suffrage protections to black men. In this drawing, men dressed as a farm laborer, a businessman, and a soldier are queued in a line to vote for the first time. Their clothing is meant to signify the diverse backgrounds of African Americans and their different contributions to the country.

Local and state laws were passed across the country within a decade to circumvent or limit this federal law, and violent tactics were used to keep black men from voting. In many places where early access to women's suffrage for local and state elections was passed, white women were the only ones to benefit in practice. Doubly discriminated against, black women, who were excluded from the 15th Amendment due to their gender, are largely forgotten within this story even though they were crucial as leaders and members of activist movements.

Graphic for 15th Amendment turns 150 Label



The First Vote, By A.R. Waud, 1867
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-37947

Expanding West

The pace of westward expansion of the United States increased after the Civil War. Women pioneers helped establish and maintain homesteads, raised families, and performed heavy physical labor. This relatively simple cotton dress follows the fashions of the 1870s silhouette, but was made so that a drawstring could be tightened or loosened at the front waist during pregnancy. Having children was an important component of women's role in expanding the nation.

The goals of the country in establishing political control across the continent involved granting suffrage in territories and new states in the west to women. Some of the earliest statewide suffrage initiatives occurred west of the Mississippi River. While these early expansions of the right to vote are celebrated, they were meant to disenfranchise and control indigenous and Latino people who already lived in these areas. White women, in their 19th-century true womanhood role of wife and mother, were cast as protectors and spreaders of the moral values of the United States.

Projects were also undertaken to educate indigenous children, often as a method of forcing them to adopt non-Native ways of living. These two portraits show Rose White Thunder, a Sioux teenager, wearing the traditional clothing she arrived at the United States Indian Industrial School in 1883, and the clothing she was wearing while attending the school until 1887.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Brown maternity dress and apron, 1870s

Avenir Museum permanent collection, 2016.17.24abG02.06a

Graphic 1 for Expanding West Label



Rose White Thunder, 1883
Dickinson College Archives
& Special Collections, CIS-
PC-004, folder 28

Graphic 2 for Expanding West Label



Rose White Thunder,
by John N. Choate,
1883-87
Dickinson College
Archives & Special
Collections, CIS-P-0019

The New Woman

As the 19th century came to a close, notions about women’s roles began to change. An ideal of the new woman began to replace the earlier cult of domesticity social custom. The new woman was more socially active, demanded more equality in marriage partnerships, and sought a higher level of education into advanced professional degrees such as medicine and science. This self-portrait by the photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston (1864-1952) pokes fun at the fears of some that the new woman was not, in fact, very womanly at all. While she is dressed in bodice, petticoat, skirts, and low-heeled shoes, she wears a boys’ cap on her head, and holds a beer stein in one hand while smoking a cigarette in the other. A frequent traveler for her photography and photojournalist job, Johnston may have owned shoes similar to these practical brown boots.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Pair of brown boots, 1890s
Donated by Sherry Dooley, 2000.299ab



Self-Portrait (as "New Woman"), by Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1896
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-38981

Fashion as Self-Defense

As the 20th century neared, women began to move around public spaces more frequently. Americans flocked to growing cities around the country in increasing numbers, and technology brought new methods of traveling across short and long distances. Crowded trains and elevated rail cars could bring women into close proximity with men, which sometimes encouraged unwanted physical advances. Multiple newspaper articles from all over the country recounted sensational stories of women using the fashion for large picture hats such as this one to protect themselves. Because of their size and the puffed hairstyle popular at the turn of the century, women used very long hat pins to secure these hats to their heads. In the case of Leoti Blaker told here in the *New York World*, the young woman was not going to allow an older man to put his hand on her lower back while riding in a crowded stage coach. She removed her hatpin and stuck it right into his arm, causing him to scream loudly and leave the coach. Blaker told the paper she used her hatpin another time to ward off a would-be robber from stealing her handbag.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Blue picture hat, c. 1900

Donated by Sherri Bruff, 2001.205

Graphic for Fashion as Self-Defense Label

THE WORLD; WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 27, 1903.

STUCK HATPIN INTO A MASHER.

Kansas Girl Gave an Elderly Exponent of the "Goo-Goo Eye" a Hard Jab in a Fifth Avenue Coach.

NOT A CARRIE NATIONITE.

But She Believes in Reforming the Gotham Ogler, Who, to Her Mind, is a Greater Evil Even than the Kansas Hobo.

A blue-eyed girl, a hatpin, a Fifth avenue stage and a well-dressed man of fifty were the constituents of a short but absorbing drama to-day which resulted in a new method of exterminating the masher evil being introduced. The blue-eyed girl was Miss Leoti Blaker and she ran a hatpin into the masher's arm with such violence that the occupants of the coach were thrown into confusion by the screams of the elderly sticklee.

Miss Blaker comes from Kansas and has only been in New York a few days. She is stopping with Mrs. Margaret MacGuire in West One Hundred and Eleventh street.

"If New York women will tolerate mashing, Kansas girls will not," said Miss Blaker indignantly to an Evening World reporter afterward. "I got on the Fifth avenue coach at Twenty-third street and sat down next to an elderly looking man in the corner. I didn't pay any attention to him but finally his actions became so annoying that I could scarcely stand it.

"I was embarrassed, of course, and kept edging up in the corner. I don't see how the other passengers in the car could have helped, seeing how dreadful he was. Finally he put his arm back of me. The coach was crowded and we were all huddled up together.

She Drew Her Hatpin.

"I became so enraged that I didn't know what to do. At last I reached up and took a hatpin from my hat. I slid it around so that I could give him a good dig, and ran that hatpin into him with all the force I possessed. Of course, all the time I was looking calmly in

MISS LEOTI BLAKER, OF KANSAS, STABBING ELDERLY MASHER WITH A HATPIN IN FIFTH AVENUE COACH.



Leoti Blaker

JEROME AND FOSTER IN ROW

District-Attorney Protests Vainly Against Suspension of Sentence in Case of H. C. Wilson, Chief Clerk U. S. Engineers.

CONVICTED OF EXTORTION.

Lively War of Words Between the Court and Prosecuting Officer, but the Judge Would Not Budge from His Position.

There was a lively row in the Court of General Sessions to-day between Judge Foster and the District-Attorney. With a face pale with anger, the District-Attorney tried to tell the Judge what he believed to be the duty of the Court, and, increased at the attitude taken by Mr. Jerome, the Judge sat with downcast features and looked at him. When the District-Attorney had finished the Court announced that it proposed to do what it conceived to be his duty, and suspended sentence on Henry C. Wilson, Chief Clerk of the United States Engineer Corps, who was convicted of attempted extortion.

Wilson was in the employ of the Government when contracting work was being done for the city. The contractors obtained the use of Government bonds. Wilson made an attempt to hold up the contractors for \$5 a day. He was trapped and convicted.

After the conviction former Assistant Attorney-General Beek, who won the Northern Pacific merger suit for the Government, became interested, with George Gordon Beak, in Wilson's behalf. Mr. Beek raised the point that Wilson as a Government employee in a question which involved Government property had no right to be tried by other than a United States Court.

Powerful Influences at Work.

Since then powerful influences have been at work for Wilson. Letters have been written in regard to his good character and begging clemency from the Judge. When brought up for sentence to-day, Judge Foster said he thought

BUTLER ROBS MILLIONAIRE.

After One Day in the Home of George H. Morgan, Perry Departed with Valuable Briza-Brao.

Looking every inch the well-groomed servant, smooth-shaven, long of the upper lip, with a face that refused to alter, no matter what was said, ever ready with a "Yes, sir," Arthur W. Perry was arrested to-day for the robbery of George H. Morgan.

Perry was a butler in the employ of the millionaire, at No. 6 East Fortieth street, for the brief space of one day. Then Perry left the place. With Perry went briza-brao that Mr. Morgan valued at \$7,000. It had cost him that and

MRS. TAYLOR ALERT AT MURDER TRIAL.

Watches Her Daughter Closely as Girl Accuses Her of Killing Husband.

SHERIFF'S MEN TO PLAY BASEBALL.

Deputies and Assistant Deputies to Oppose Each Other While Ex-Sheriffs Look On.

MONTICELLO, N. Y., May 27.—At the

"Stuck Hatpin into a Masher," *New York Evening World*, May 27, 1903
Library of Congress, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers

Section III: During (runway)

Properly Dressed for Social Reform

Social reformers of the late 1800s who headed organizations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) often came from wealthy economic backgrounds. They used their access to funds and to social networks to support their causes. The image here of members of the Illinois state chapter of the WCTU shows women wearing tight-fitting bodices with several small buttons at the front like this dark purple bodice. While their lower bodies cannot be seen they are likely wearing skirts with bustles at the back similar to the purple ensemble in this exhibition. This style was very popular in the 1880s, demonstrating their economic access to current fashions. Some women's rights activists of the 1800s and early 1900s argued that women should be enfranchised specifically because of their distinctive idealized role as the moral compass of society. Social reform organizations like the WCTU, which promoted abstinence from alcohol consumption, often promoted a Protestant moral message. Domestic and sexual violence were tied to alcoholism, and alcoholism was discussed by the WCTU as a particular issue among poorer classes and immigrants. While they advocated for improved working conditions, better sanitation in urban housing, and access to things such as education and healthcare, many of these organizations also required immigrant families to "Americanize," or drop their ethnic cultural traditions in favor of white, middle-class, Protestant values.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Maroon bodice and skirt, 1882

Donated by Marcia Dowdy, 1990.12.7ab

Graphic for Properly Dressed for Social Reform Label



*Presentation
Committee
W.C.T.U. of Illinois,
by Henry Pietz, c.
1879
Library of
Congress, Prints &
Photographs
Division, LC-DIG-
ppmsca-40924*

Learning in Style

Skirts in the 1890s lost the bustle in the back. Fullness shifted to the upper sleeves of the bodice as seen on this yellow ensemble. Known as leg-of-mutton sleeves, the large pouf at the top was a sharp contrast to the fitted forearm and the slimmer, straighter line of the skirt. It became more acceptable for women to participate in public settings by the late 1800s, including expanded opportunities for working in jobs such as the new department stores that began appearing in large cities, and in obtaining higher education degrees at colleges and universities. Women who were at the forefront of this social shift often chose to dress in modest yet fashionable clothing to avoid ridicule or accusations of being unwomanly.

The four women in this photograph were likely students when they took a moment to pose outside a building at Atlanta University wearing stylish skirts, shirts, and hats. Concerns of black women continued to be ignored by many white women's rights groups. In the 1890s they created their own clubs and social reform organizations that promoted women's rights, including suffrage, in addition to combatting racism.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Yellow bodice and skirt, 1895

Donated by Joyce Knapp, 2019.26.15ab

Graphic 1 for Learning in Style Label



Four African American women seated on steps of building at Atlanta University, Georgia, by Thomas E. Askew, 1890s

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-08778

Suited for Suffrage

While many suffragists chose to follow fashions closely to avoid ridicule or dismissal of their cause, others embraced the opportunity to wear men's clothing or styles made for women inspired by menswear. This ensemble of historic apparel includes men's shirt, vest, and trousers paired with a women's linen duster jacket. Some women found it more practical or comfortable to combine elements of apparel meant for both genders into a single ensemble for work such as field labor, and for leisure activities such as bicycling. In this portrait of suffragist Kathleen de Vere Taylor (c. 1873-1949), she wears a men's shirt, necktie, and wool sport coat. In 1914, Taylor began working as a stockbroker in New York City, a work environment that was dominated by men.

Graphic 2 for Suited for Suffrage label

Puerto Rican suffragist Luisa Capetillo (1879-1922) was arrested in Havana, Cuba, for wearing men's trousers in public. The charges were dropped, and Capetillo continued to wear menswear. In 1909 she published *Mi Opinión sobre las Libertades, Derechos, y Deberes de la Mujer* (*My Opinion about the Rights, Liberties, and Responsibilities of Women*), part of her long crusade for women's rights. Many Puerto Rican women were active in the fight for women's suffrage in the United States, including sending members to meetings, protests, and parades on the mainland. Though they were as American as other U.S. suffragists, they did not receive unrestricted enfranchisement until 1935 when it was granted by the Puerto Rican territorial government.

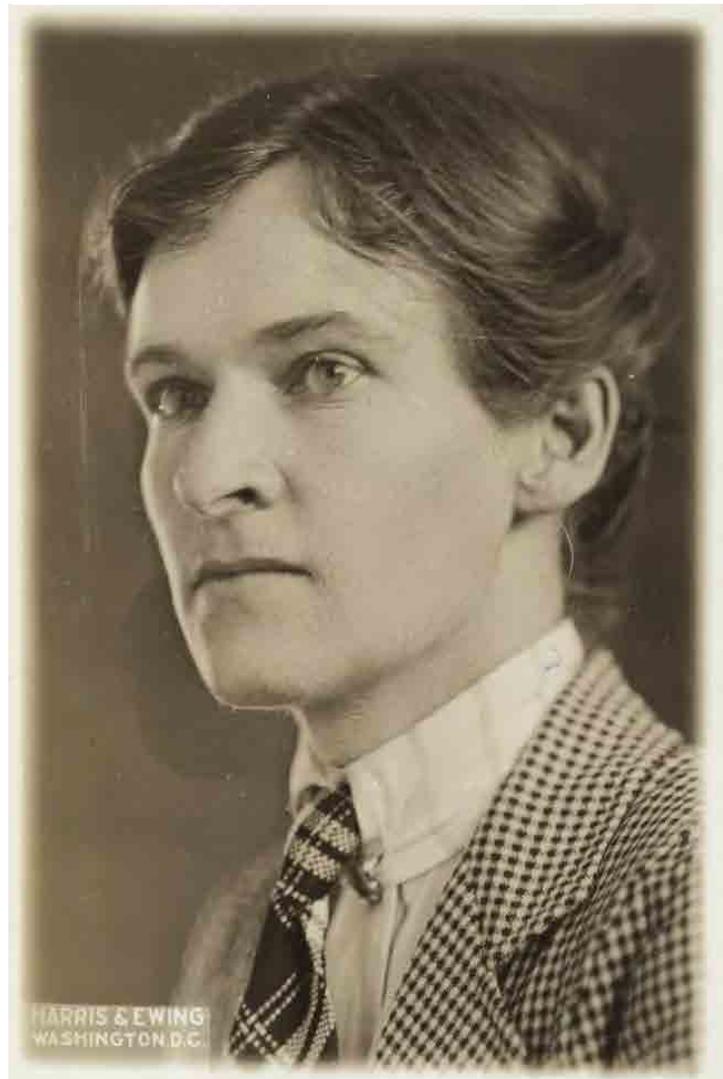
Credit information for the items in the exhibit:

Women's linen duster, c. 1900
Avenir Museum permanent collection, 1975.2.6a

Men's white vest, c. 1900
Donated by Sandra T. Ehrman, 1988.18.1

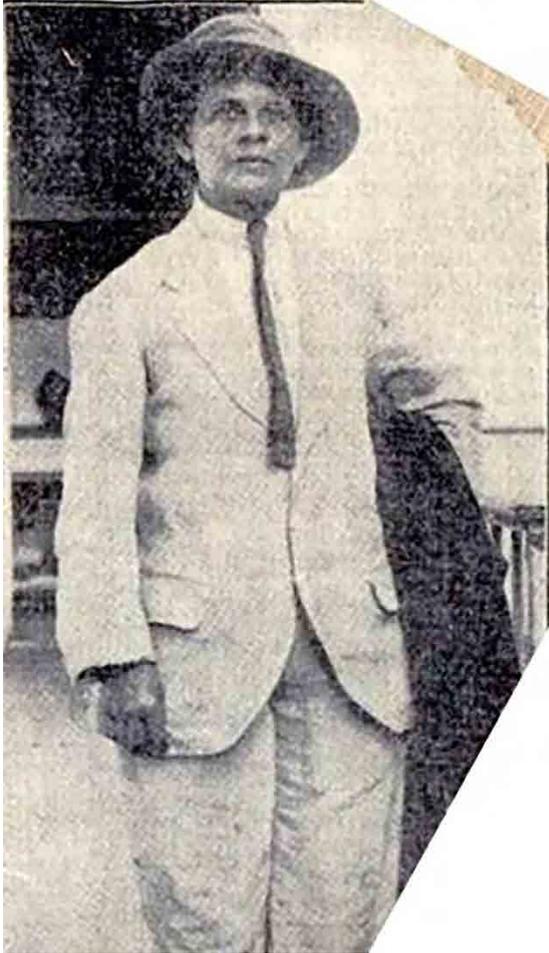
Men's striped shirt, c. 1900
Donated by Vicki Johnson Slaton, 1988.26.3

Men's black trousers, c. 1900
Avenir Museum permanent collection, 951.3b



*Kathleen Taylor, of New York. Speaker and organizer for the Woman's Party in Kansas, 1916-20
Records of the National Woman's Party, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress*

Graphic 2 for Suited for Suffrage Label



Luisa Capetillo, c. 1915

Biblioteca Nacional José
Martí, La Habana, Cuba

Fashion on Fire

At the turn of the twentieth century, women of all classes were wearing a new apparel item called the shirtwaist. These blouses were usually made in white or off-white colors from lighter weight cotton or linen, and were sometimes worn with a jacket over them. The desired silhouette at the time was known as the S-curve because it emphasized an ample bust, a thin waist, and a full backside at the hip. Shirtwaists were cut with extra fabric in the body to create the blousy, full chest to contrast with the straight, flat fronts of skirts at the time.

These garments were the primary product manufactured at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City, where most of the workers employed were young Italian and Jewish immigrant women. In order to discourage workers from leaving the factory floor to take breaks, the factory operators kept many doors in the building locked. When a fire broke out inside the 8th floor workroom on March 25, 1911, workers were stuck inside. A dramatic scene unfolded as some people attempted to flee by jumping from the windows of the building. The fire killed 146 people, 123 of whom were women and girls. Earlier efforts for workplace safety by labor unionists and workers' rights advocates that had gone unheeded suddenly became priorities in federal and state labor safety regulations. The fire also led to the expansion and strengthening of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), which was founded in 1900.

Credit information for the items in the exhibit:

Mended shirtwaist, c. 1910
Avenir Museum
permanent collection,
2005.483a

Brown skirt, c. 1910
Donated by Catherine
Winfield, 971.55b

White shirtwaist, c. 1910
Donated by Denver Art
Museum, 1989.13.15

White skirt, c. 1910
Donated by Elizabeth
Colbert, 1985.52.9b

Graphic for Fashion on Fire Label



Strikes, Ladies Tailors, Picket Girls on Duty, 1910
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-49516

The West Leads the Way

As the population of U.S. citizens increased in western territories these territories transitioned into states, renewing the debate of women's suffrage in the west. The first state that granted women the vote without restrictions was Wyoming in 1890. In Colorado, women gained voting rights in 1893, the first time women's suffrage was expanded through popular referendum.

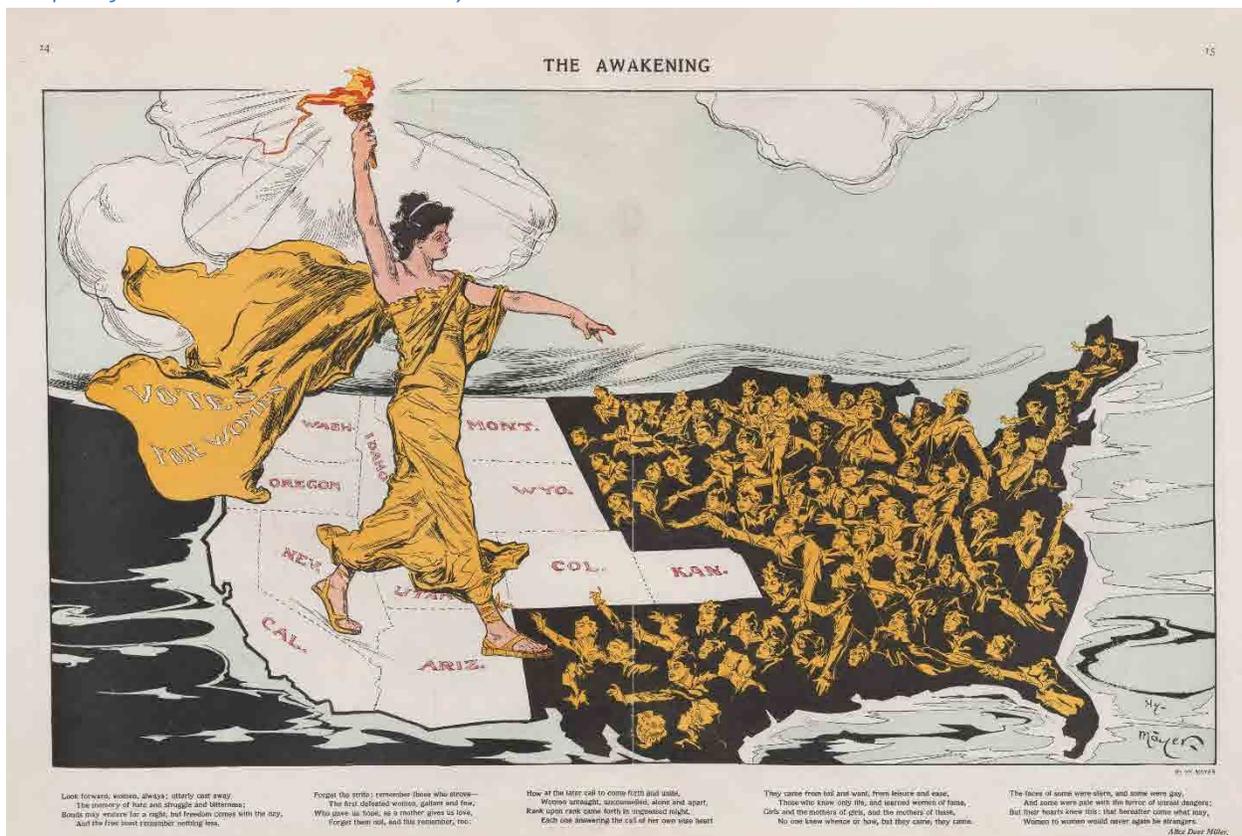
Many women from western states were involved in the national suffrage movement and organizations. This lithographic print from 1915 was widely published at the time. It shows a reversal of the typical idea that the United States in the east is marching westward toward civilizing the West and bringing progress. Instead, a woman representing Lady Liberty marches eastward toward masses of women grasping for the vote, with the western states that have already passed women's suffrage behind her. Such nationalistic imagery played on the heightened sense of patriotism during World War I (1914-1918).

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

White dress with wheat bundles, c. 1910

Donated by Margareth Merrill, 2011.340

Graphic for The West Leads the Way Label



The Awakening, by Henry Mayer, 1915

Cornell University, PJ Mode Collection of Persuasive Cartography

Yellow, White, and Purple

During the first two decades of the 1900s, white dresses and suits were fashionable choices for all women. Dresses made from white, lightweight cotton or linen and often embellished with floral appliqué or lace details were known at the time as lingerie dresses. Suffragists recognized all-white ensembles as an eye-catching choice both in person and in black-and-white photographs such as this 1916 photograph of National Woman's Party members at a meeting in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Because this apparel style was popular at the time, many women had it in their closets. However, keeping white clothing clean took additional resources that poor and working class women did not have, limiting them in their ability to express their support for suffrage through fashion.

In addition to white, supporters of women's suffrage also identified themselves by wearing yellow, white, and purple accessories. The color yellow was a nod to Kansas, the Sunflower State, where the first referendum for women's suffrage was held in 1867. The color purple united American suffragists with their counterparts in Great Britain, who used the tri-colored combination of green, white, and purple to signal their visual political support. Flags, banners, sashes, hatbands, cockades, and all manner of other fashion accessories were made and marketed for suffragists to wear.

Credit information for the items in the exhibit:

White dress with tiered skirt, c. 1910 Donated by Margareth Merrill, 2011.330

White floral embroidery dress, 1907
Donated by Dorothy Carpenter, 2001.527

Graphic for Yellow, White, and Purple Label



*National Woman's Party members meet in Colorado Springs for a conference to decide a course of action during the 1916 presidential election campaign, 1916
Records of the National Woman's Party, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress*

Graphic at the front of the runway in the exhibit



Youngest parader in New York City suffragist parade, 1912
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-58365

Radicals in Uniform

The path toward suffrage was not all white dresses and beribboned caps. Many protestors were arrested and imprisoned in the late 1910s, particularly in Washington, D.C. These radical supporters came from all walks of life – old, young, married, single, mothers, daughters, sisters. In the press, the suffrage movement played on aspects of their identities that would elicit sympathy from the general public. Images of the women while imprisoned wearing ill-fitting clothing and in dark, small cells were published by the women’s movement and spread to other media outlets sympathetic to their cause. While incarcerated, suffragists were not treated differently than other incarcerated women, but it was seen as a drastic measure by the government due to the social and economic standing of many suffragists in contrast to the typical prisoner who lacked connections and money.

After decades of hard work and sacrifice, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified on August 18, 1920.

Graphic for Radicals in Uniform Label

Credit information for the items in the exhibit:

White dress with sailor collar, c. 1910
Donated by Margareth Merrill,
2011.341

Cream dress with crochet lace, c. 1910
Donated by Sherry Dooley, 2000.229

Helena Hill Weed, Norwalk, Conn., serving 3 day sentence in D.C. prison for carrying banner, "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," 1917 Records of the National Woman's Party, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress



Votes for Women...?

The fight for universal enfranchisement and equal civil rights protections for all Americans was still far from over. In the decade that followed ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, many women involved in the national suffrage movement shifted their attentions toward civil rights protections for immigrants, laborers, and people of color, including further protections of the right to vote. Race relations remained at a low point throughout the 1920s, including consistent violence against African Americans and negative reactions to immigrants.

The Covered Wagon Whist Club pictured here was a group of African American women who gathered in Washington D.C. in the late 1920s and early 1930s for socializing. The other photograph shows a group of five students outside Ammons Hall on the CSU campus. All of these young women are dressed in the fashionable silhouette of the 1920s. Dresses became unfitted and short. Evening dresses like the purple and yellow lace dresses in this exhibition were particularly revealing as they were often sleeveless and made from thin, slinky materials like silk chiffon. The clothing coupled with the bob haircuts that became popular at the same time emphasized a youthful, boyish look for women. Detractors of the women's rights movement and suffrage pointed to the passage of the 19th Amendment and modern cultural ideas of women's roles as negative impacts on society that brought about the wild behavior of the Roaring Twenties.

Credit information for the items in the exhibit:

Yellow and lace flapper dress, 1920s Donated by Alice Wallace, 1975.1.18

Purple dress and scarf, 1920s
Donated by Carolyn Ostertag, 1973.3.60ab

Graphic 1 for Votes for Women...? Label



The Covered Wagon Whist Club, by Addison N. Scurlock, late 1920s
Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution



Girls with Aggie dolls, 1925

University Historic Photograph Collection, CSU Libraries, Archives & Special Collections

Section IV: After Documenting the Depression

The decade of the 1930s is best characterized by the Great Depression that hit virtually all industries and regions of the United States. Families displaced by a lack of work in large cities or environmental disasters in traditionally agricultural areas moved from place to place seeking shelter and employment. Federal organizations such as the Farm Security Administration ran social relief programs and hired photographers to document the living conditions of migrants and the effectiveness of programs such as Agricultural Workers' Health and Medical Association camps. Female photographers including Dorothea Lange and Marion Post Wolcott captured some of the most well-known images of this era.

The simple house dress and practical, worn raincoat on exhibit were typical of the 1930s. Even people who did not experience drastic life changes became more cautious and frugal. Displaced people experiencing extreme poverty in the 1930s were characterized as undesirable. Many photographs of migrant families and workers show details of their patched, ripped, and stained clothing.

Graphics for Documenting the Depression Label



Credit information for the items in the exhibit:

Peaches print dress, 1930s
Donated by Connie Ninneman, 951.97

Trench coat, 1930s
Donated by Claudine Fisher, 1976.3.6ab

Farm Security Administration (FSA) camp for migratory agricultural workers at Farmersville, by Dorothea Lange, 1939
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USF34-019663-D



Ada Turner and Evelyn M. Driver Home Management and Home Economics Supervisor, canning English peas with pressure cooker in Mrs. Missouri Thomas' kitchen, Flint River Farms, Georgia, by Marion Post Wolcott, 1939
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, New York Public Library

Working for the War

While it did not formally join the Allied Forces of World War II until 1941, the United States began mobilizing and providing support in the late 1930s. Approximately 350,000 women served in the U.S. Armed Forces during the war, and many thousands more worked or volunteered for the American Red Cross. Women's dress uniforms for both the Red Cross and gender-segregated military units consisted of jackets, skirts, and high heels.

Women also joined the civilian workforce in unprecedented numbers. Many worked in jobs and industries that largely excluded women prior to the war, including welders nicknamed "Rosie the Riveter" like the woman in this color photograph. After the war ended in 1945, most of these women were fired and replaced by men returning from military service.

Japanese American women experienced forced displacement as part of the federal government's internment program that incarcerated approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans in relocation centers located primarily in the western United States. This photograph shows women working in a sewing factory at the Manzanar Relocation Center in central California during their incarceration.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Red Cross uniform, 1945-1947

Donated by George Valley and Chris Guffy, 2013.22.2ab

Graphic 1 for Working for the War Label



Operating a hand drill at Vultee-Nashville, woman is working on a "Vengeance" dive bomber, Tennessee, by Alfred T. Palmer, 1943

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-fsac-1a35371

Graphic 2 for Working for the War Label



Sumiko Shigematsu, foreman of power sewing machine girls, Manzanar Relocation Center, California,
by Ansel Adams, 1943

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppprs-00150

The Homemaker and the Computer

Fluffy petticoats under colorfully printed dresses epitomize current perceptions of women's fashion in the 1950s. Styles were hyper-feminine, emphasizing women's curves. Delicacy was seen as ladylike, and was demonstrated in fashionable practices such as the woman in this photograph who is wearing gloves while shopping for groceries. The stereotype of the bored, frustrated housewife that emerged in the 1960s disregarded women who enjoyed their roles as wives and mothers, and who did not want to labor outside the home.

The 1950s American housewife was not the experience of all women. Many women who worked outside the home prior to and during World War II continued to earn wages, often from economic necessity. These workers included women employed by the federal government or war-related private industry companies. This photograph shows staff at the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) in the 1950s, including ten women who likely worked as human computers who executed complex mathematical calculations. Pictured in the front row are L. Doris Barron, Amy Swann, Virginia Finch, Peggy White, Jean Pond, Evalyn Wells, Mary Korycinski, Doris Blanchard, Phyllis Henry, and Mary Jackson. Their clothing is not discernably different from the housewife's day dress

Credit information for the items in the exhibit:

Red gingham dress, c. 1950

Donated by Jan Else, 1991.264a

Apron, 1950s

Donated by Joan Miller, 952.20

Graphic 1 for The Homemaker and the Computer Label



Housewife shopping in supermarket, by Thomas J. O'Halloran, 1957
Library of Congress, Prints & Photograph Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-51756

Graphic 2 for The Homemaker and the Computer Label



4x4 Supersonic Pressure Tunnel staff, 1950s
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Activism Becomes Fashionable

In the early 1960s fashions and society began to change. By the end of the decade people were wearing dramatically different clothing and social justice activists had affected everything from cultural ideals of womanhood to laws expanding civil rights. Women were involved in a variety of causes from the anti-nuclear war Women Strike for Peace to the agricultural labor union United Farm Workers of America to the several organizations that comprised the African American civil rights movement. They served as founding members, national leaders, grassroots organizers, and local coordinators. Women's participation was crucial to the many successes that social justice movements achieved in this decade.

The changes in fashion over the 1960s are reflected in these photographs. In one, several women peace protestors cover their faces with their signs so they cannot be identified. They wear rather conservative suits and dresses in styles and cuts similar to this chartreuse coat and skirt. In another photograph from the early 1960s a young woman is using nonviolent resistance tactics while being arrested. She is dressed in clothing considered

proper and respectable for middle class women of the time, though her legs are being exposed as she is being carried by police officers. Women of color who participated in social activism were often particularly careful to dress modestly.

The final photograph included here shows a woman dressed much differently. She is marching to promote a boycott against grape farm owners on behalf of farm laborers in 1969, and she wears a button-down shirt and blue jeans with a bandana on her head. In the second half of the decade, counterculture styles worn by activists as radical clothing choices became mainstream fashion.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Chartreuse coat and skirt, 1960s
Donated by Max and Joyce Douglas,
2002.161ab

Graphic 1 for Activism Becomes Fashionable Label



800 women strikers for peace on 47 St near the United Nations Building, by Phil Stanziola, 1962
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-128465

Graphic 2 Activism Becomes Fashionable Label



African American woman being carried to police patrol wagon during demonstration in Brooklyn, New York, by Dick DiMarsico, 1963
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-134715

Graphic 3 for Activism Becomes Fashionable Label



Grape Boycott Pickets, by Bob Thurber 1969
United Farm Workers Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University

A Second Wave for Women's Rights

Many politically involved women of the 1960s found that their concerns about women's rights as part of the larger civil rights movement were frequently dismissed by male leaders. As a result, women used their organizing and activism skills to form a new wave of groups that centered women's rights as their cause. The National Organization for Women (NOW), founded in 1966, was among the largest of these organizations. In its earliest years, NOW was criticized for not including the concerns of women who were not white, middle class, or heterosexual. In 1969, a NOW leader forced lesbians of the New York chapter out of the organization after calling them the "lavender menace," a phrase referencing the 1950s anti-communist Lavender Scare that targeted gay and lesbian people. As a response, some lesbians wore shirts with the phrase to a major meeting and interrupted the proceedings to read a statement of their concerns. In 1970, NOW officially declared support for women of all sexual orientations.

Advances in medicine including more reliable birth control methods further contributed to more open displays of sexuality by women as part of the growing tide of feminist activism in the 1970s. Clinging knit

fabrics that hugged the body and wrap style dresses popularized by designer Diane Von Furstenberg such as this floral printed dress reflected the sexual revolution in fashion. Other women's rights activists dressed in clothing inspired by blue collar menswear including blue jeans, loose t-shirts, and utilitarian jackets. Subcultural fashions such as soul style, which was connected to the Black Pride movement, emphasized prints inspired by fabrics and apparel like the dashiki top popular in West Africa. This dashiki features a print with phrases in English and French celebrating the United Nations International Women's Year in 1975, recognizing the efforts of women's rights activists from around the world and acknowledging the need for further action to improve women's lives.

Credit information for the items in the exhibit:

Diane Von Furstenberg wrap dress, 1974-1980

Donated by Ruth S. Hougen, 971.513

Dashiki, 1975

Donated by Elizabeth Gifford, 1999.150

Brown suede pants, 1970s

Avenir Museum permanent collection, 2009.2120b

Graphic 1 for A Second Wave For Women's Rights Label



Suzanne Doty hugging Marian Hayden, NOW national office staff, 1973

Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard Library

Graphic 2 for A Second Wave For Women's Rights Label



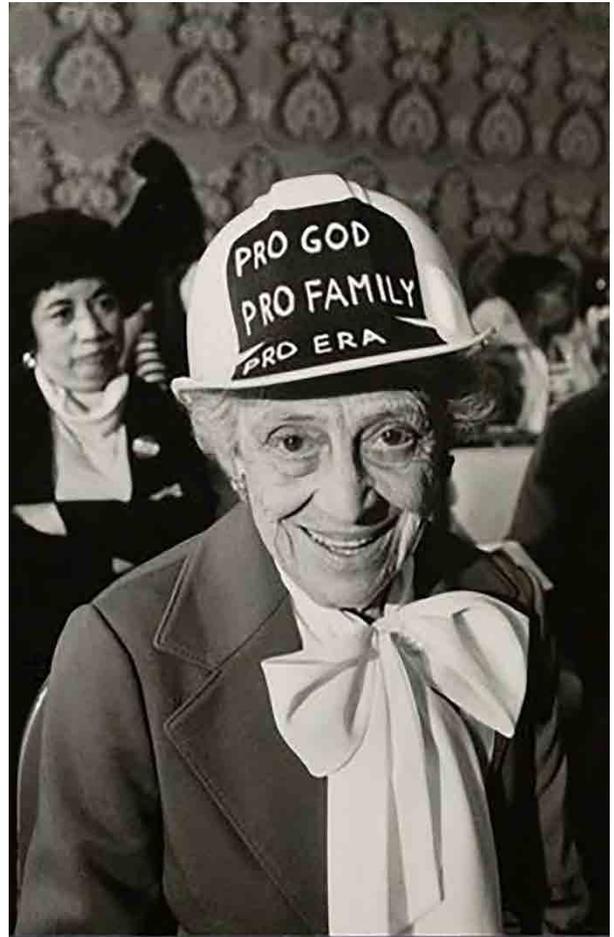
*Lavender Menace at Second Congress to Unite Women, NYC, May 1970, by Diana Davies
Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library*

An Equal Rights Amendment

One of the major causes adopted by women of the 1960s and 1970s feminist movement was a renewal of efforts to pass an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution. The primary goal of the amendment, which was first introduced to the U.S. Congress in 1923, is to include language protecting people from discrimination because of their sex. It was passed by Congress in 1972, but has not been ratified by the 38 of 50 states required. While members of organizations such as NOW supported the ERA in the 1970s, many women did not. These two photographs show women on both sides of the issue.

They are dressed in similar clothing including shirts with oversized bows at the front collar popular in the late 1970s, demonstrating that fashion choices do not always immediately indicate a woman's political leanings. The buttons worn by the anti-ERA women do signal their viewpoint, as does the pro-ERA woman's cap expressing reasons to support the ERA very similar to signage near the women who are against it. All of these women seem to agree on fashion and on the need to improve the United States. As is true throughout American history, they do not agree how best to achieve this shared goal.

Graphic 1 for An Equal Rights Amendment Label



*Older woman at International Women's Year, by Bettye Lane, 1977
Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard Library*

Graphic 2 For An Equal Rights Amendment Label



Anti-choice and anti-ERA booth in exhibition hall at International Women's Year conference in Houston, by Bettye Lane, 1977

Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard Library

Power Suits and Sweat Pants

Conservatism is the word often used to describe the 1980s in U.S. history. There was a decline in women's rights activism and increased political control by socially conservative leaders during this decade, and women's fashion also shifted to looser cuts with more coverage of the body. However, the rise of the business woman's power suit like this blue one by designer Oleg Cassini is reflective of the growing numbers of women entering the white collar workforce and gaining leadership positions in industries traditionally dominated by men. The boxy cut of jackets and the extreme height of shoulder pads mimicked men's broader bodies.

In contrast to these formal business suits was the rise of athletic clothing as everyday wear. This photograph shows a woman wearing a blousy sweater, sweat pants, and sneakers while breastfeeding her baby in a park. Expanded job opportunities and public breastfeeding were both examples of women of the 1980s benefiting from legal and social reform efforts of the previous decades.

Some initiatives supported by women's rights activists of the 1970s that were successful continued to be challenged. This photograph shows a woman minister who is marching in support of abortion in the mid-1980s, though the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled in favor of the right to an abortion in 1973. The top button pinned to her lapel reads "Pro God / Pro Family / Pro Legal Abortion." Faith leaders who supported and opposed issues often appeared at public protests wearing their clerical attire to tie their roles as religious leaders to social causes.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Oleg Cassini blue suit, 1980s

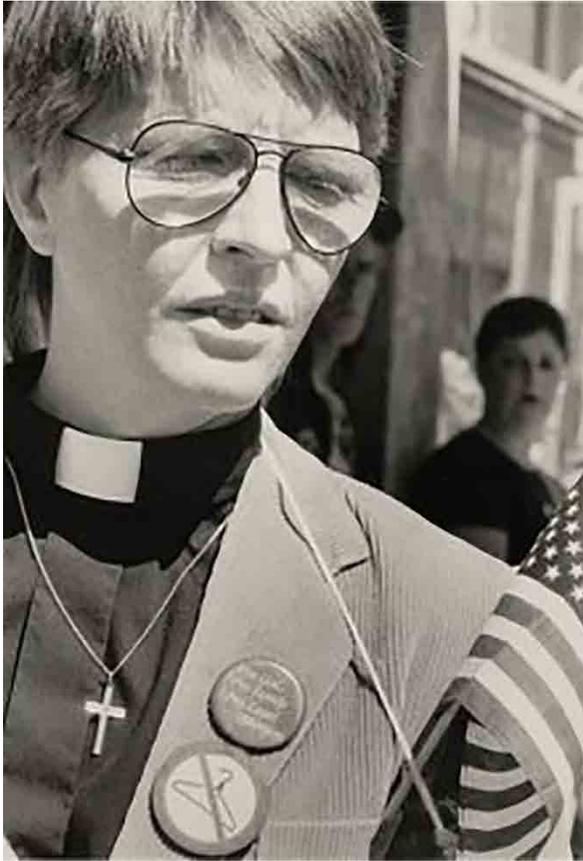
Donated by Christ Center Community Church, 2016.5.1ab

Graphic 1 for Power Suits and Sweat Pants Label



Woman breast feeding at playground, by Freda Leinwand, 1984
Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard Library

Graphic 2 for Power Suits and Sweat Pants Label



*Unidentified Episcopal minister supports pro-choice abortion demonstration in front of the Long Island Bill Baird Abortion Clinic, by Bettye Lane, 1985
Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard Library*

Bold Colors for Bold Women

In the 1990s another increase in women's rights activism occurred, including in political leadership. The year 1992 was nicknamed the Year of the Woman after several women ran and were elected to serve as U.S. Senators. Their motivation included confirmation hearings the previous year for then Supreme Court Justice nominee Clarence Thomas, who was accused of sexual harassment by a number of women, but who was confirmed by the all-male Senate Judiciary Committee. Several candidates are pictured here with Senator Barbara Mikulski, all wearing boldly colored suits similar to this bright red Liz Claiborne dress and cropped jacket. Bright shades for women's work wear remained popular throughout the decade, though the cut of clothing became less boxy as the years passed.

Improving the rights of women workers, including the ever-growing numbers entering professional jobs, was a leading cause of feminists in the 1990s. Gains were made in lowering the pay gap between men and women, and women in medical and science fields increased. The technology boom and digital revolution of the decade largely excluded women as leaders in the industry, though they were contributors at other levels within this sector.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Liz Claiborne red dress and jacket, 1990s
Donated by Janet Demorest, 2011.310ab

Graphic for Bold Colors for Bold Women Label



*Senators at the 1992 Democratic National Convention, Madison Square Garden, New York City, by
Laura Patterson, 1992
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ds-07217*

The Next Millennium

Exposure of the body, including low cut necklines and even lower cut waistlines were popular in the first years of the twenty-first century. This evening gown with spaghetti straps, a brassiere-inspired bust, and a high slit in the skirt reflects these styles.

At the same time as the popularity of these revealing fashions, a media frenzy occurred when a woman athlete took off her uniform shirt during an internationally televised game. While celebrating her soccer team's win at the FIFA Women's World Cup Final in 1999, Brandi Chastain removed her shirt and kneeled down on the field after scoring the winning goal. Women's increased participation in collegial and professional athletics and the invention of the sports bra itself grew out of the activism of the 1970s. The success of women's soccer teams in the 1990s and early 2000s led to a growth in the sport across the nation. Chastain and her teammates, including Kristine Lilly and Mia Hamm pictured here, became role models for girls interested in athletics.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

St. John Knits pink gown, c. 2000

Donated by the Estate of Victoria Monfort, 2010.100

Graphic for The Next Millennium Label



Kristine Lilly (13) and Mia Hamm (9) in St. Louis, by John Mena, 1998
John Mena/Wikimedia

From White Dresses to Pink Hats

As the centennial of the 19th Amendment approached, associations between clothing and activism continued in the 2010s. One women’s rights issue deeply tied to the fashion decisions of women is sexual harassment and sexual violence. Participants in marches and protests have long carried signs like these referencing language about women supposedly targeted by rapists because of their clothing choices. Anti-rape organizations date as far back as the 1800s with groups such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, who advocated for raising the legal age of consent for sexual activity in efforts to protect girls as young as seven from abuse. The organization Take Back the Night was founded in the 1970s and still sponsors nighttime marches, many on college and university campuses where rates of sexual assault are higher than in the general population. The rise of social media and the use of hashtags as part of the #MeToo movement that started in 2006 have allowed for new forms of activism in digital platforms.

Derogatory language related to sexual assault used during the 2016 presidential race by then candidate Donald Trump resulted in a massive response by handicraft activists, or craftivists, who crowdsourced the making of pink “pussyhats” that mimicked the shape of cat’s ears to wear to marches held in January 2017 across the country. This hand-knitted hat was worn by CSU graduate student Theresa Barosh to the Denver march. Like the white dresses of the 1910s suffragists, the 2010s pussyhat has become an iconic article of clothing in the history of women’s rights activism in the United States.

Graphics for From White Dresses to Pink Hats Label

Credit information for the item in the exhibit: Pussyhat, made by Michelle Parker, 2017 On loan from Theresa Barosh



Participants at SlutWalk DC, by Ben Schumin, 2013
Ben Schumin Flickr

Section V: Thank you

Thank You

Lise Youngblade, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Health and Human Sciences

Karen Hyllegard, Ph.D.
Department Head, Design and Merchandising

Courtney Morgan
Avenir Museum Graduate Assistant

Avenir Museum Volunteers: Jan Alexander, Mary Biggers, Terrie Cornell, Amparo Maya, Kathy McDonald, Kim Neptune, Amy Sobotta Marcella Wells, and The Quilters

Avenir Museum Custodial Team: Eric Ennis and Gabe Valdez

Funding provided by: Avenir Museum Exhibition Education Fund

Loans courtesy of: Theresa Barosh, the DeDecker Studio

Exhibition planning and research assistance by students in the Spring 2019 graduate course "Care and Exhibit of Museum Collections" (clockwise from bottom left): Kim Selinske, Megan Clevenger, Colin Fogerty, Rose Gorrell, Kim Neptune, Jordan Kearschner, Jillian Lobner, Carly Boerrigter, Courtney Morgan, Kayna Hobbs

Graphic for Thank You Label



Section VI: The Flag

The Flag

Members of the National Woman's Party (NWP) sewed a large yellow, white, and purple striped flag after Congress passed the 19th Amendment on June 4, 1919. Each time another state ratified it, the suffragists added a star until they reached the 36 states that met total required at the time. When the amendment was ratified on August 18, 1920, NWP members celebrated at their Washington, D.C., headquarters by unfurling the flag from the second floor balcony.

The Ratification Flag hanging in this exhibition is a re-created version of a historic textile that went missing over the last century. This one was made for Loveland-based artist Jane DeDecker to use during the sculpting process for the creation of a women's suffrage monument. It is machine-sewn using techniques and fabrics that are likely quite different from those the NWP used to make the original. DeDecker's sister, who made this flag, was most concerned with approximating the size and drape of fabric of the historic flag to aid in the appearance of the textile in the sculpture.

The DeDecker Studio and the non-profit Every Word We Utter Monument organization, named for a quote in a letter written by suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton to fellow activist Lucretia Mott in 1880, are currently raising funds and ushering approval through Congress for a monument in Washington, D.C. At the time this exhibition opened, the Senate bill awaited hearing at the committee level, and the House bill was approved by the committee and awaited a floor vote by the full House of Representatives. If passed by both houses and approved by the president, the monument will be the first outdoor sculpture commemorating women's suffrage in the nation's capital.

Credit information for the item in the exhibit:

Re-created Ratification Flag, 2018-19 On loan from the DeDecker Studio

Graphic 1 for The Flag Label



*Sewing stars on
suffrage flag, 1920
National Photo
Company Collection,
Library of Congress*

Graphic 2 for The Flag Label



When Tennessee the 36th state ratified, Aug 18, 1920, Alice Paul, National Chairman of the Woman's Party, unfurled the ratification banner from Suffrage headquarters, 1920
Records of the National Woman's Party, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Graphic 3 for The Flag Label



Courtesy of the DeDecker Studio

*This content was originally intended for use in an onsite gallery, but is being offered in this alternate digital format due to the unprecedented circumstances of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. To the best of our knowledge, all graphic images in this document fall under fair use guidelines or are used with permission of the rights holder. If you feel we have used an image in error, please contact the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising.