

2018

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### Recommended Citation

Abel, Lauren (2018) "The California Plan: California's Suffrage Strategy and Its Effects in Other States and the National Suffrage Campaign," *Voces Novae*: Vol. 5 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/vocesnovae/vol5/iss1/2>

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Voces Novae: Chapman University Historical Review, Vol 4, No 1 (2013)

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[Home](#) > [Vol 4, No 1 \(2013\)](#) > [Abel](#)

## The California Plan: California's Suffrage Strategy and Its Effects in Other States and the National Suffrage Campaign

**Lauren Abel**

Today, women form a significant part of America's voting population and as such, the female vote is actively sought by politicians eager to assume office or gain approval for legislation. Women serve on school boards, as state district representatives, senators, and as members of the President's cabinet. Women's ability to participate in and determine the course of social and political issues is credited to the suffrage movement. This seventy-five year long endeavor began in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention and ended in 1920 with President Wilson's approval of the Nineteenth Amendment, which effectively granted women the vote.

During the nineteenth century women across the nation began to advocate for their rights. Women had been aware of their status as second class citizens in American society since the Founding Fathers drafted the Constitution. As Abigail Adams urged her husband to remember the ladies, women of the nineteenth century continued to encourage their husbands, fathers, and brothers to do the same for them at the polling booths; however, they soon grew impatient with the lack of results. Married women had no right to their property or children, working women were denied fair wages, women could not serve on juries, and most importantly women could not vote. Seeking greater control of their lives, women across the country began to search for ways to improve their social and political rights during the 1840s. Although the women's suffrage movement had no official ideology, all women agreed that they should have the right to vote. This belief rang true for women across America particularly for those in California.<sup>[1]</sup>

Already thirty years underway, the women's suffrage movement was turning into one of the longest civil rights campaigns in the history of the United States. Between 1848 and 1920, women's rights activists struggled to secure a federal amendment that would grant women the vote. Its length was due to several factors, including an internal "schism" between leading suffrage organizations, the Spanish-American war, World War I, and various political and social obstacles throughout the country. Progress was further impeded by a lack of unity amongst suffrage organization members over whether to employ politicking or grassroots methods for their campaign. Unlike California, which quickly developed arguments and tactics that unified activists, suffrage leagues of the East Coast, South, and Midwest suffered the most from this discord.<sup>[2]</sup>

Even the national organization, the American Equal Rights Association (AERA), saw its members split into two factions in 1869. First formed in 1866, the AERA was a combination of woman's suffrage and antislavery organizations. However, the union was short lived. Passage of the Fourteenth Amendment in July 1866 granted suffrage to all American males, thereby dashing the hopes of suffragettes. Divided over whether to accept the Fourteenth Amendment as a promise for women's suffrage or to regard it as an insult, the members of AERA split into two groups. This division would impede the progress of the suffrage campaign for the next twenty one years.<sup>[3]</sup>

The newly formed National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) competed against one another for public support. Led by Susan Brownell Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the NWSA focused on securing a federal amendment that would enfranchise women. NWSA members openly challenged their exclusion from the vote, stating that as citizens of the United States they were entitled to

Lauren Abel

suffrage. Susan B. Anthony attempted to cast her ballot in New York where she was promptly arrested. By 1875 the Supreme Court ruled that citizenship did not guarantee suffrage, and women's suffrage should be determined by individual states.<sup>[4]</sup>

This "New Departure" politicking attempt to reinterpret the Constitution contrasted with the AWSA's grassroots method. The AWSA, headed by Lucy Stone, encouraged suffragists to travel throughout the nation. Once established in different states, these agents would then form local suffrage organizations, distribute literature, and speak at events on behalf of their cause. In adopting different techniques to solve the same issue, the divided suffrage leagues nearly stalled the movement in Eastern, Southern, and some Midwestern states. It would take a suffrage victory from the Golden State to reunite the divided factions. A developed, effective strategy to enfranchise women throughout the country was needed.<sup>[5]</sup>

California was admitted to the Union as part of the Compromise of 1850, and was a newcomer to the suffrage movement. As early as 1870, women from California began to campaign for enfranchisement. This development in the suffrage movement came during a time when the suffrage campaign began to gain significant ground in the Western United States. Between 1869 and 1870, the territories of Wyoming and Utah adopted legislation that granted women suffrage. By the end of the nineteenth century, these pioneering territories, along with Colorado and Idaho, would successfully retain their woman suffrage laws as they were admitted to the Union. Success of these four states encouraged struggling suffrage organizations across America, but the greatest stride in revitalizing the national campaign came from the 1911 California victory. Unity was achieved through the collective efforts of upper class, middle class, and working class women, whose collaboration had a significant impact on the progress of the national suffrage movement. This in turn became a model for the national efforts, leading to victory for the cause.<sup>[6]</sup>

Unlike the suffrage victories of Wyoming and Utah, California's success caught the attention of suffrage organizations throughout the country. Preeminent groups from New York and Boston praised the triumph of the "California plan" for its effectiveness in garnering the support needed to enfranchise women at the state and federal level. The "California plan" was named for the revolutionary manner in which California's suffrage leagues organized, coordinated, and developed new arguments and tactics to achieve their goal. California's suffragettes did not seek endorsement from political parties; their one goal was to obtain suffrage. Unlike suffragettes of other states, California's activists encouraged collaboration between women of all social classes through participation in clubs and unions. What had previously been regarded as the work of middle and upper class women became the work of all Californian women. Efforts to collaborate developed the successful cross-class coalitions of upper, middle, and working class women that were crucial to the success of California's suffrage movement. The new California model was adopted by suffrage organizations throughout the country and proved vital to the 1920 passage of the federal amendment.<sup>[7]</sup>

California's suffrage movement took place during a time when leading suffrage organizations from the East Coast were in a state of disarray. Like the members of the NWSA and AWSA, many suffragettes could not agree on how to manage the campaign. Some felt suffrage granted by individual states would force Congress to approve a federal amendment, while others disagreed. The conflicted ideologies of suffrage leaders further impeded progress for women's suffrage. There were women who sought the vote to influence the ongoing Temperance Movement, while others believed the vote should only be held by women on school or union boards. Californian suffragettes discouraged these alternative motives, and sought the vote for the sake of gaining equality as citizens.<sup>[8]</sup>

With no alternate goals muddling their campaign, California suffragettes were able to develop a clear and concise argument to support their cause, something other suffrage organizations still struggled to achieve. Suffragettes from the Golden State argued that women were entitled to the same political rights as men because of their economic contributions. This clear argument paved the way for suffragettes to initiate modern tactics such as door-to-door canvassing, electric signs, billboards, and the use of motor cars for travel. These vigorous grassroots

campaigns proved critical to the California suffrage movement. They spurred the development of successful coalitions of upper, middle, and working class women.<sup>[9]</sup>

### Primary and Secondary Source Materials

Testimonies, letters, articles, speeches, and other first hand accounts attest to the significant impact California's innovative suffrage movement. However, this crucial victory has been eclipsed by texts on the subject. The women's suffrage campaign from California is often overshadowed by the earlier successes of Wyoming and Utah, the first in the country to grant women full voting rights. Texts about the national suffrage movement, such as those by Robert Cooney and Eleanor Flexner, typically focus on suffrage efforts from the East Coast. Works such as these dedicate only a brief chapter or two to a summary of how Western women won the vote; and these chapters commonly explore the enfranchisement of women from Wyoming and Utah. While these texts provide a broad account of suffrage campaigns from the Frontier, further analysis of California's victory as it effected the national suffrage movement and other state campaigns are not fully explored. This results in a gap in research that addresses California's impact on other states and the national campaign.<sup>[10]</sup>

Western states receive greater attention in works from Rebecca Mead and Gayle Gullett; however the authors refer to the California campaign as part of a larger study of the success of women's enfranchisement campaigns from the Frontier. For instance, Mead's study stresses the political adaptability of Western states as what earned Frontier women progress in their cause. In a chapter about California's campaign, Mead cites the suffragettes' clarity of goals as the key to their success. She argues that the Golden State's clearly defined objective influenced organizational precedents in other suffrage leagues and even galvanized suffrage campaigns in neighboring states such as Nevada. Unfortunately, Mead's analysis of the effect California's campaign had on the national campaign does not go into further detail. Although Mead's work does not explore the effects of the California suffrage movement, it does provide an excellent summary of the effective ways in which Western states organized and carried out their suffrage campaigns, therefore asserting that the Frontier played a significant role in the progress of the national suffrage movement.<sup>[11]</sup>

Gayle Gullett's work carefully studies the rise of the women's movement in California while emphasizing the link between the western women's suffrage movement and progressivism. This work provides a detailed understanding of the complex organization of the Golden State's campaign as well as cross-class coalitions that formed between upper, middle, and working class Californian women. Thoroughly detailed, Gullett's work chronicles the rise of organized womanhood, the progress of the movement, and the ultimate results of the activists' work. Although the author does acknowledge the development of California's cross-class coalitions, she focuses on the efforts of upper and middle class women and offers little indication of the ways working women participated in these alliances. In spite of this, Gullett's work provides a condensed conclusion that considers the effects of the "California plan" on other states and the national campaign.<sup>[12]</sup>

Secondary sources on the California suffrage movement are essential materials as they provide well researched summaries of a complex campaign; however primary materials offer greater insight to the effectiveness of the "California plan". Primary sources include reports, articles, firsthand accounts, pamphlets, and letters published, between 1869 and 1920. The "California plan" is highly regarded through accounts from numerous suffrage groups throughout the nation. Suffragettes from the remaining Western states, Nevada, Montana, and New Mexico, that had not enacted equal suffrage published articles attesting to the success of the woman's ballot in California. A 1914 article published by the Nevada Equal Franchise Society references California's victory as a testament to the success of women's enfranchisement. California served as an inspiration to the suffrage movement.<sup>[13]</sup>

Even the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) credited California as a revolutionary pioneer of the national campaign for suffrage. The NAWSA formed in 1890 to unify the previously separated NWSA and AWSA. The new organization would become the largest women's rights league in the United States and helped pass women's suffrage legislation at the local, state, and federal level. As the nation's leading suffrage

Lauren Abel

organization, the NAWSA maintained meticulous records of suffrage victories from across the country. Their findings were consolidated into published works such as *Woman Suffrage: Arguments and Results, 1910-1911*. This anthology highlights the importance of enfranchisement victories from the West Coast, but many entries emphasize the success in California. For instance, a section by Frances Maule Björkman describes California's triumph as an even greater victory than any previous success because the amount of women voters doubled on account of the large number of ladies who registered to vote after the 1911 campaign. This higher percentage of newly enfranchised women held great promise for the NAWSA, who hoped to use this development to strengthen their argument for women's rights.<sup>[14]</sup>

Other state and national suffrage leagues were not the only organizations to document California's triumph. Many suffragettes from California, such as Katherine Phillips Edson, Maud Younger, and Selina Solomons published firsthand accounts of their work. Works from these women represent the records kept by upper, middle, and working class women alike, thereby attesting to the crucial bond between the groups. Edson encouraged clubwomen of Southern California to take an active role in the suffrage movement, Younger worked amongst and on behalf of wage earning women, and Solomons prompted wage earners to support the suffrage cause. Each woman played a significant role in developing the cross-class coalitions that would later represent the "California plan". Their firsthand accounts lend credibility to the argument of this paper; that California's suffragettes had a great influence on and revolutionized the ongoing suffrage movement.<sup>[15]</sup>

### **Collaboration within Women's Clubs**

The successful efforts of Solomons, Edson, and other California suffragettes can be credited to their collaboration with club organizations. At the turn of the century, membership in a women's club was considered a fashionable status symbol. Between the 1870s and 1920s, women's clubs developed new standards and organizations to address emerging social issues of the day. Topics such as child labor laws, food regulation, the rights of working women, and politics were discussed amongst club women throughout the country. These new movements of "organized womanhood" helped women of the upper class engage in social work that broadened their opportunities to influence the public sphere.<sup>[16]</sup>

Women's clubs were crucial elements in the California suffrage movement. The 1896 state election saw the first attempt to pass a full suffrage amendment in California; however it was defeated by the powerful liquor industry who feared women's suffrage would mean the end of their business. After the defeat of the women's franchise amendment in 1896, women's clubs helped activists reorganize and reinvigorate their campaign. By 1900, the once elite society clubs recognized the need to reach out and "...help those who could not help themselves, to mold public opinion, to take an active part in the world's great work..." This report from the *Los Angeles Times* represents the growing trend within women's clubs to connect with women of all classes. Clubs throughout the state achieved this renewed sense of purpose and collaboration through the creation of state club federations and committees. These federations linked club members from northern and southern California and encouraged its activists to take a greater part in civic affairs.<sup>[17]</sup>

The push to encourage women's clubs to reach out to aid the common people came from prominent southern California suffragette Clara Burdette. Burdette first joined the world of women's clubs in 1893 with her membership to the Los Angeles Ebell Club. Initially, she was inspired by the club's desire to advance women in politics, culture, and civic affairs; but Burdette gradually became disgruntled with the lack of public outreach. Persuaded by a speech made before the Congress of Representative Women at the Chicago World's Fair by the feminist lecturer May Wright Sewall, Burdette decided to form a federation of women's clubs to better enhance activists involvement in public affairs. She encouraged women's clubs throughout the state to join together and spread the spirit of organized altruism. Burdette believed this approach could grant women access to new frontiers of public work, such as in the betterment of civil service and slum prevention. By 1900, representatives from forty women's clubs joined to form a state federation. The new California Federation of Women's Clubs (CFWC), boasted a membership of six thousand women from clubs throughout the state. This new union between club

members would facilitate relationships between women of different social classes and further aid the California suffrage campaign.<sup>[18]</sup>

In 1906, the CFWC reported that a significant number of clubs were engaged in civic affairs such as city beautification projects. However, few were fully committed to civic projects that furthered the influence of women within the public arena. An example of a club that was dedicated to the advancement of women's status within society was the California Club of San Francisco (CCSF). Members of this club sought to reform society in ways that would better their positions as public activists. For instance, the club's campaign to save the Calaveras Grove of redwoods from a lumber business garnered national attention and helped the club women achieve a place within the public sphere. The alliances formed between the CCSF clubwomen and the prominent politicians who aided their cause helped to garner interest and support for other causes the club promoted, particularly for women's suffrage. This new interest and support from politicians proved tremendously beneficial to the success of the votes for women movement.<sup>[19]</sup>

Formed in 1897, the CCSF's founders originally intended for the club to serve as a suffrage vanguard. The organization instead decided to stress the importance of all public affairs, not just the vote. By addressing matters other than women's suffrage, such as the ill-treatment of female laborers, the club's diverse agenda attracted a variety of women who gradually learned the value of enfranchisement on a cross-class basis. Through discussion of other pertinent civil issues, CCSF members realized the potential benefits of women's suffrage. This approach emphasized the need for all clubs to become more responsive to the needs of a diverse populace and proved effective in advancing California's suffrage movement.<sup>[20]</sup>

The united foundation of club women enabled California suffragettes to expand their public role. Club women from California soon gained recognition for their efforts in establishing juvenile courts, playgrounds, and other civil amenities. Both members and nonmembers shared a belief in the transformative power of playgrounds. They believed the playgrounds would foster favorable skills and values within children, therefore reducing juvenile crime. This campaign to develop playgrounds within California's major cities allowed women greater access to the public sphere. Women from Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland were granted positions with leading city playground commissions to monitor and assess the progress of the new play areas. Their civic altruism and grassroots tactics proved effective in expanding their role into the world of politics.<sup>[21]</sup>

In addition to expanding their roles as civic activists, the most important function of women's clubs was to expose club members to class issues of the day. Through their work within clubs, women, such as Katherine Phillips Edson, became familiar with the plight of working class women. Stories of unfair wages, horrible work hours, and worker mistreatment exposed upper and middle class women like Edson to the reality many working women endured. Determined to act, clubs throughout the state, such as Los Angeles' Friday Morning Club, advocated for improved worker's rights. With their expanding roles as public activists and a greater understanding of women's issues, clubwomen became leaders of the California suffrage movement and went on to inspire suffragettes throughout the country.

### **Cross-Class Alliances Facilitated by Socialist Women**

By the turn of the century, club women were recognized as key reformers in the public arena; yet they suffered from a limited membership. Club leaders, such as Clara Burdette, sought to establish the organizations as respectable centers for civic activism. Therefore club membership was restricted to financially secure individuals, or members of the upper class. Although there were numerous clubs, leagues, unions, and organizations throughout the state, few sponsored a combined membership of upper class, middle class, and working class women. While reformed arguments, new tactics, and greater participation in public affairs helped bridge the gap between these different classes of women, they were ultimately unified by California's socialist women.<sup>[22]</sup>

The efforts of socialist women to unite the working, middle, and upper class women of California proved to be a crucial element in the success of the suffrage movement. The key to the effectiveness of socialist women, under

Lauren Abel

the leadership of the Woman's Socialist Union of California (WSU), came from their introduction of new arguments and modern tactics. Socialist suffragettes argued that women were entitled to political rights because of their economic contributions. Women who worked in factories and women who worked from home were considered to be contributors to the social wealth of the state. Previous arguments for suffrage often incorporated proposed uses for the vote; for instance, many women felt the vote would help curb the influence of the liquor industry. Arguments such as these often alienated activists and dissuaded politicians from pledging full support to the suffrage cause. This new argument proved much simpler and more unifying than previous suffrage principles; it created a new sense of solidarity and further strengthened the resolve of California suffragettes of all classes.[\[23\]](#)

California's socialist women put their reasoning to practice in clubs throughout the state. Taking advantage of California's political climate, which stood open to "radical ideas and political alternatives", socialist women struck out to collaborate with women of all classes. Through local WSU branches, they collaborated with labor organizations and mainstream suffrage leagues. With their new principle gaining acceptance from suffragettes of different social classes, socialist women secured leadership positions in leading suffrage and labor associations such as the Votes for Women Club and the Wage Earners' Suffrage League. Their widely accepted principles allowed socialist suffragettes to secure a foothold in directing the states' campaign. This gave them the opportunity to put new tactics into practice and therefore encourage even greater support from women, and men, of all classes.[\[24\]](#)

The development of new tactics facilitated greater cooperation and interaction between the different classes with the suffrage movement. The WSU introduced the use of billboard advertisements and electric signs, door-to-door canvassing, and the distribution of suffrage literature and organization of rallies in foreign languages. These aggressive grassroots tactics educated a broader expanse of the population about the benefits of women's suffrage. The practice of distributing suffrage literature and hosting rallies in foreign languages was an effective strategy to attract greater support from the immigrant population. Use of new technology, such as electric signs and car campaigns, caught the attention of the press industry. This strategy resulted in sustained publicity in newspapers, such as the *Citizen* of Los Angeles, that drew support from men and women of the middle and working classes. Although considered militant and brash, the new tactics used by the WSU proved productive in encouraging greater collaboration between women of different classes.[\[25\]](#)

The work of California's WSU facilitated the "class-bridging" necessary to secure victory for the suffrage movement. The socialist women proved to be crucial intermediaries between upper, middle, and working class suffragettes. Socialist and non-socialist activists alike were united in their crusade for the vote. A new generation of middle class and college educated women sympathized with the new arguments and tactics utilized by socialist women. The new argument that women's economic contributions entitled them to equal political rights drew support of working class women. To promote collaboration between the different classes socialist women organized class bridging meetings, in which women of all classes were brought together to discuss suffrage strategies. The new cross class alliances encouraged by socialist suffragettes proved critical to the success of California's suffrage ballot.[\[26\]](#)

During a time when socialism was widely feared, WSU members thrived amongst California's activists. As members of the working or middle class, these women proved to be respectable citizens. Many came from Protestant families, were educated, and held professional jobs; similar to their non socialist counterparts. Ultimately, California's socialist and non socialist women recognized suffrage as a unifying element because it reflected their sense of commonality as well as their differences. Through their perseverance and support from upper class suffragettes, the WSU became a leader in California's suffrage campaign. Although collaboration between upper class and socialist women seems ironic, this relationship demonstrates the commitment of California suffragettes to their cause. Therefore, socialist women developed the California suffrage model that would later be adopted by other states and the national suffrage campaign.[\[27\]](#)

Women's clubs, leagues, and other organizations played a pivotal role in the progress of the California suffrage campaign. Throughout the state, women of the upper and middle classes participated in associations which addressed their concerns and furthered their interests in civic activism. Issues such as political corruption, concern for public health matters, and the treatment of women workers were raised within women's clubs across California. Participation within these groups fostered a sense of civic involvement and public duty amongst the club members. The concern felt by these women resulted in the realization that the ability to vote was the only means to remedy these social injustices.

This new found awareness grew out of upper class and middle class organizations alike and served as a unifying element following the 1896 state election. Prior to this event, women of different social classes experienced little to no interaction with one another through their clubs. Although non conducive to furthering the cause of women's suffrage, the lack of unity between women's clubs proved beneficial in the development of the skills necessary to address their concerns. Practice in lobbying public officials, distributing educational materials, and speaking in public are a few examples of the skills women gained through their participation in clubs, leagues, and organizations. By 1900, collaboration between club women of different social classes proved tremendously beneficial to the progress of the California suffrage movement. This progress would not have been achieved if it were not for the experience and skills gained by women before they agreed to collaborate.<sup>[28]</sup>

### **Upper Class Women's Contributions to Cross-Class Alliances**

Upper class women of California were particularly involved in women's clubs. At the turn of the century, women's clubs were considered to be symbols of an elite status within society. These new "fashionable clubs" drew great numbers of upper class women who sought membership within the organizations because of their popularity. As membership within high society clubs increased, the nature of these organizations was altered, and their influence expanded into the public sphere. Women and men alike recognized the reputation of women's clubs as credible; therefore, women's work within clubs became acceptable to support. High society clubs, such as the Friday Morning Club of Los Angeles, became places of women's work, and paved the way for upper class women to promote women's suffrage.<sup>[29]</sup>

Founded in 1891, the Friday Morning Club (FMC) attracted socially prominent members from the Los Angeles community, as well as women with advanced views on suffrage. The club's membership proved incredibly keen to participate in political matters. The FMC entered the world of California's political affairs when club members agreed to support the over twenty female teachers who had been unjustly removed from their positions by the Teacher's Committee of the Los Angeles School Board in July of 1891. A committee was organized to publicly ask school board members to explain the reasons behind their rash decisions. When local newspapers reported on the weak responses given by board members in defense of their actions, public support for the club women's activism soared. Continued pressure from the public and the club women's efforts saw half the teachers returned to their positions by October 1891. Upper class women had advocated for female workers, the teachers, and therefore contributed to the formation of cross-class coalitions. This example of civic involvement links the work of upper and middle class women to the social issues faced by working class women and demonstrates the progress of the "California plan".<sup>[30]</sup>

Encouraged by their success in restoring the female teachers to their positions, FMC members took it upon themselves to prevent such incidents from happening again. They decided the best way to do so was to place a woman on the Los Angeles School Board. When a member of the board abruptly resigned, the club women took the opportunity to nominate fellow member Margaret Hughes to serve until the next state election. Hughes's appointment to the school board represented the FMC's full entry into politics. By the time of the 1892 school board election, the club had become increasingly involved in local politics; its members were recognized as credible participants in political debates concerning local, social issues. Their success fostered greater cross-class collaboration within Los Angeles county, as members from the club were now familiar with the gender discrimination female workers were faced with. This newfound sense of public involvement and awareness proved

Lauren Abel

acceptable to the upper class women of the FMC who had been seeking practices of civic activism that balanced personal satisfaction in their work with the betterment of society.<sup>[31]</sup>

The club members continued their civic work within Los Angeles, and in 1907 endorsed a suffrage amendment under consideration by the state legislature. Within a short amount of time the FMC went from an organization advocating for local justice, to a full-fledged supporter of women's suffrage. The experiences gleaned by the upper class women of the club proved invaluable to their participation in the suffrage campaign. As suffragists throughout the state aptly noted, participation of women's clubs in the movement resulted in an increase of support for women's suffrage. The work of upper class club women legitimized the work of suffragettes and thus helped further the suffrage movement of California.<sup>[32]</sup>

### **Middle Class Women's Contributions to Cross-Class Alliances**

Like their upper class counterparts, middle class women recognized the potential that lay in enfranchisement. Through their work on behalf of the public good, these women developed grassroots suffrage campaigns that proved instrumental in promoting the cause. Influential California suffragette Maud Younger serves as a prime example of the works completed by middle class women. A native Californian, Younger came from a prosperous, upper middle class family; yet she dedicated her life to the betterment of labor conditions for working women. In 1901 Younger journeyed from San Francisco to New York, en route to visit her father in Paris. While in New York, she visited the tenements of the Lower East Side to learn about the living conditions of the working poor. Her experience in the overcrowded, poorly maintained buildings and exposure to the cruelties of factory labor encouraged Younger to advocate for worker's rights; particularly for the rights of working women.<sup>[33]</sup>

After living and working as a waitress in New York for five years, Younger returned to San Francisco to continue her work as a reformer. Her admittance to the Waitresses' Union of San Francisco in 1906 furthered her experience and her ability to improve women's labor laws. She, along with other union delegates, recognized the great need for "good laws" that would protect wage earning women from being taken advantage of. Younger's activism for the working woman connected to the suffrage movement, as she felt working women needed the vote "more than any other women--more than any man". Her tireless efforts between union women and suffragettes personified the "cross-class alliances" that existed between California's suffrage leagues.<sup>[34]</sup>

While Younger's work is an exceptional example of the efforts undertaken on behalf of civic improvement, it does not epitomize the bulk of the work done by middle class suffragettes of California. Between 1870 and 1900, the percentage of women attending college had risen from 0.7% to 2.8%. Over fifty percent of these female college graduates dedicated their time and energy to careers or social reform projects. This burgeoning group of middle class, educated women developed a successful grassroots campaign that emphasized public education. Lectures and public speeches were given at every opportunity. Their goal was to better inform the "everyman" of the ways in which women's suffrage would improve society, and to lay to rest any misgivings to be had by the male constituents. These public education approaches used by middle class women were recognized as vital to the success of California's and the national suffrage movement.<sup>[35]</sup>

In 1908, the middle class, college women of California organized the College Equal Suffrage League of Northern California (CESLNC). With chapters established at the campuses of UC Berkeley and Stanford University, the league's members pledged support to women, progress, and prosperity. The goal was to recruit young, well educated, middle class women to become activists for the suffrage cause. Recruitment of these women was a crucial goal of the CESLNC. The league viewed these women as capable of speaking for all women; whether that be in a public meeting or from an automobile in a small, rural town.<sup>[36]</sup>

California's College Suffrage League proved instrumental to the progress of the suffrage movement. Members took advice from the National College Equal Suffrage League, which published an article detailing the work college suffragists should pursue. The National League stressed "...that the work of the College Chapters should be educational rather than political". Educational information to be shared about the suffrage movement was to be

gathered from suffrage literature, "...including a...scrap-or text-book containing the best leaflets and pamphlets...". Members were required to be well versed in arguments and historical records of the suffrage movement, as well as practiced debaters and public speakers. College suffrage leagues fostered prepared groups of suffragists who could properly inform the public of their cause. The grassroots efforts used to inform the public of the importance of women's suffrage is recognized as crucial to California's suffrage movement.[\[37\]](#)

Lectures and speeches were not the only educational tools used by California's collegiate suffragettes. Printed materials, such as pamphlets, flyers, letters, and articles published in newspapers, proved an effective way for these suffragettes to inform their audience. Although printing expenses were costly, these materials were easily distributed, circulated, and reproduced in large quantities by college and middle class women alike. A report issued by the Equal Suffrage League of Northern California in 1913 dedicated three sections to printed press works suffrage organizations could use to their advantage. President of the League, Charlotte Anita Whitney, went as far as to recommend selecting a woman with "...professional experience in newspaper work..." to serve as chairman of a league's publicity and state press committees. Over time city newspapers, such as San Francisco's *The Call* and the *Sacramento Bee*, pledged support to the suffrage movement and published articles on behalf of the women's campaign.[\[38\]](#)

Through their experience with women's clubs, the upper class and middle class women of California aided their state's suffrage campaign. Although these women were inspired to serve different aspects of the public good, they ultimately recognized the vote as the only means to achieve their goals. Their pursuit of the vote would have gone unfulfilled if not for the experience gleaned from participation in other social organizations. Women's clubs, leagues, and organizations fostered a sense of civic involvement and public duty amongst the club members that inspired them to pursue a higher and more important goal.

#### **Working Women's Contributions to Cross-Class Alliances**

Those women separate from upper and middle class society of California formed suffrage leagues that proved instrumental in procuring support for their cause. By the 1900s, working women recognized the value of the vote and proved prepared to argue their case. As wage earners, these women were typically members of trade unions; consequently they were familiar with voicing their opinion in a public area. Furthermore, working women made up a large portion of the working population, over eighteen percent in 1900. Through their participation in labor unions, working class women gained the oratory and organization skills necessary to inform the public of their cause, and demonstrated their usefulness to the Californian suffrage movement. Their participation in the suffrage campaign strengthened the new model of suffrage activism that would later be adopted by suffrage leagues throughout the country.[\[39\]](#)

Working women proved vital to the success of California's suffrage campaign. These women worked as waitresses, factory workers, and teachers; they believed enfranchisement would ensure improved rights. Through unions and other labor organizations, activists fought for the well-being of female workers. They lobbied for shorter work days, better pay, and safer work environments. Their activism created a community of women who were accustomed to publicly expressing their opinions with poise and confidence. Trade unions and labor leagues transformed working women into political and social activists who were prepared to serve as leaders of the suffrage cause.[\[40\]](#)

Wage earning women of San Francisco were particularly active in the suffrage cause. Labor unions within the city had direct access to city hall, therefore the female activists had a greater chance of gaining recognition for their work. Between 1900 and 1910 the number of female laborers in San Francisco had risen dramatically. This growing number of women publically voiced their support of enfranchisement, formed organizations to promote suffrage, lobbied labor organizations for their approval of the vote, and worked with middle class activists to achieve their goal. In 1908, to express their commitment to suffrage, the lady leaders of San Francisco's labor movement formed the Wage Earners' Suffrage League (WESL). The league represented San Francisco's large population of female

Lauren Abel

wage earners, ten percent of which held membership in labor unions, and pledged to advocate for "...better conditions for working women and...to promote the suffrage idea."[\[41\]](#)

Unionization was key to working women's success as suffrage supporters. Effective union representation began in the 1880s. Organizations such as the Typographical Union Local 21 and the Knights of Labor Ladies Assembly #5855 were formed to represent San Francisco's female workers. These early leagues initiated the call for women to organize for improved civil and political rights. After 1900, recognition from San Francisco's Labor Council helped women's unions gain momentum. By 1913, fourteen unions were affiliated with the Labor Council and many of the female members expressed satisfaction with the unions' work on behalf of improving the lives of working women.[\[42\]](#)

San Francisco's Waitresses' Union, Local 48, is an example of a successful women's labor union. Founded as a branch of the Cook's and Waiter's Alliance in 1901, this union would demonstrate women's ability to run their own union without aid from male union members. In 1906 the Waitresses Local 48 split from their male counterparts of the Waiters Local 30 to better address their unique goals and concerns. During their five years as associates of the Waiters Local the Waitresses' Union built up membership, earned shorter work hours, cleaner work environments, and developed an agreement that dictated waitresses did not have to perform tasks unrelated to customer service such as cleaning duties. The Waitresses' Union Local 48 would go on to become the largest women's union in the city. These achievements provided a smoother transition for the newly independent Waitresses' Union to continue their special interest work without male leadership.[\[43\]](#)

The early 1900s provided unique opportunities for San Franciscan working women to unionize. High numbers of wage earning citizens distinguished the city as a union town, where unions represented approximately fifty five thousand to sixty thousand workers. The strong presence of union leagues encouraged women workers to organize and pursue their goals. In addition to the powerful presence of unions, female unionists could rely on the support of the city government. After a 1901 worker's strike went awry, unionists formed the Union Labor Party (ULP). Between 1901 and 1911, the ULP held several influential government positions on the mayor's administration and with the Board of Supervisors. The power of the ULP ensured a pro-labor atmosphere that proved conducive to the work of the lady activists.[\[44\]](#)

Ultimately, the female union members of San Francisco proved the most prepared and capable to advocate for suffrage. By 1907, the California suffrage movement had regained its momentum and union women were ready to work alongside other suffragettes for the vote. Working women campaigned closely with the middle class women of the San Francisco Equal Suffrage League. As secretary of the Waitresses' Local 48, Louise LaRue, reported the female union workers joined "...with the...Woman's Suffrage League in San Francisco and got along fine with them; we endorsed everything they did." Wage earning and middle class women alike worked together to ensure the passage of a suffrage amendment that was introduced to the State Assembly in March of 1907. However, even with the support of the ULP and the California Federation of Labor, the amendment failed to gain approval from the state Senate.[\[45\]](#)

In spite of the failed amendment, this thriving community of wage earning suffragettes proved vital to the success of California's movement. Through their work as members of labor unions, working women achieved the experience and skills necessary to promote the suffrage cause. Their determination to secure the vote revolutionized the model of suffrage activism and enhanced the "California plan". An article from the NAWSA stated the organization "...recognized that it needed working-class support in order to win total suffrage for women." Previous models of suffrage activism, which largely relied on the efforts of upper and middle class activists, were not enough. This realization resulted in renewed efforts by numerous suffrage leagues to interest union and other wage-earning women to become active in the suffrage movement. Suffrage work of upper and middle class women, alone, was not enough to ensure passage of a suffrage amendment. Instead, support from a strong female working force, as seen with the "California plan" model, proved integral to the success of women's enfranchisement.[\[46\]](#)

12 Voces Novae, Vol 4, No 1 (2013)

## Joining Together

Participation in women's clubs, leagues, and unions encouraged California's women to pursue the vote. These organizations helped women of the upper, middle, and working class develop the skills necessary to coordinate a complex statewide suffrage campaign. In the early 1900s, in order to expedite their progress, California's upper class, middle class, and working suffragettes began to join together to achieve their common goal. The desire to unite clubwomen, college women, and female workers to the suffrage cause came from the realization that each faction could benefit from enfranchisement. Suffrage meant empowerment for clubwomen to continue their women's work to better society, improved rights for women in the work industry, and greater civil and political rights for women as a whole. Rather than work against one another, the suffrage activists of the upper, middle, and working classes agreed to work together to achieve the vote.

The notion that California's upper, middle, and working class women easily set aside their differences to work towards suffrage is misleading. The process of joining the state's suffragettes proved as complex and difficult as the efforts to maintain unity between the AERA. The AERA remained split between the AWSA and NWSA from 1869 until 1890 when AWSA founder Lucy Stone and NWSA founder Susan B. Anthony decided to merge their suffrage leagues. The newly formed NAWSA represented Stone's and Anthony's realization that the two leagues had similar principles, methods, and objectives. The idea of remaining separate proved more damaging to their cause, thus the women agreed to join forces.<sup>[47]</sup>

This experience is similar to that of California's suffrage activists. The demand for suffrage had increased amongst upper class, middle class, and working women between 1900 and 1910 when a rise in feminist theories resulted in their viewing suffrage as a unifying force that would not diminish their distinct identities. This principle, however, did not dissuade some suffragettes from adopting a unified appearance in hopes of gaining greater support from the public. In 1909 Louise LaRue, the secretary of San Francisco's Local 48 union, reported to the National Women's Trade Union League Convention on a split between unionist and non unionist suffragettes. This followed a 1907 report, in which LaRue claimed she and other unionist suffragettes who had joined forces with non unionist activists in the struggle for suffrage were cooperating with one another. Ultimately, the two groups worked together for the duration of the campaign, but only to maintain a united front, to achieve their goals, and to encourage continued support from the public.<sup>[48]</sup>

The split La Rue references in her report occurred as the result of a 1907 union strike against the city's streetcar transit system. Female union members joined their male counterparts against the corrupt United Railroad company and expected upper and middle class suffragettes to support the strike and boycott streetcars. When it was revealed that these women opposed the strike, the amalgamation between non-unionist and unionist women dissolved. Although the strike and report of cooperative efforts occurred within the same year, LaRue stated she felt compelled to present an outward appearance of cordiality between the two groups in order to prevent anti-suffrage leagues from exploiting their discord. LaRue's actions demonstrates the reality of the difficulties different classes of women faced when attempting to collaborate. Although the promise of the vote served as a unifying principle, the challenge of maintaining their identities and principles while pursuing their goal proved to be a difficult task for California's suffragettes.<sup>[49]</sup>

With an already challenging endeavor before them, suffragettes did all they could to attract as much support from those in power as possible. As a result, California suffrage leagues adopted strict racist attitudes. As with other suffrage leagues across the nation, California's activists turned away those who were not Anglo-Americans. As a result African American, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican women were not allowed to join an Anglo-American suffrage club. These minorities were also discriminated against in unions as well. For instance, San Francisco's Waitresses' Union stipulated that '...all white women who are working...are eligible for membership.'<sup>[50]</sup>

This 'white women only' clause was perpetrated by leaders of the California movement. Some women, such as Clara Burdette of Los Angeles' Ebell Club, argued that minority women were too militant and

Lauren Abel

boisterous; and therefore represented a threat that could ruin the credibility of the campaign. Although Californian activists firmly drew a "color line" within their clubs and unions, there were those who spoke out against such actions. Caroline Severance, the respected abolitionist, argued that white women should draw "...the line of social fellowship at education, character, and good breeding", not at race. However, Severance also acknowledged the fact that accepting minority races into the suffrage movement might jeopardize the union between Northern and Southern suffrage clubs. Ultimately, in order to preserve the campaign, it was decided that California's clubs and unions would continue to toe the "color line".<sup>[51]</sup>

Needless to say this is a discouraging aspect of the "California plan", yet this decision reflected the suffragette's need to adhere to the common social fundamentals of the day. If their goal was to rally support from those in power, then California's women would have to abide by the beliefs of those who held power. In this instance, suffragettes had no choice but to rely on their enfranchised male counterparts to grant women the vote. During this time, men viewed minority races as a threat to their social positions. This is especially true for working men, who feared Chinese and Japanese immigrants would work longer shifts for cheaper wages and effectively steal jobs away from the Anglo-American male. Influenced by their male counterparts, California suffragettes established "white women only" requirements in their clubs and unions. Although discriminatory, these rules garnered the support of California's men who would go on to endorse the state's eighth amendment in October 1911, thereby granting women the vote.<sup>[52]</sup>

The success California's suffragettes had in overcoming class, and not racial, divisions to enfranchise women proved a safer route for the movement; however, by early 1900, the cross-class coalitions reached an extremely fragile stage. Following the 1907 streetcar strike, unionist suffragettes felt distrustful of their elite counterparts, yet they did not abandon the suffrage cause. Working through the Wage Earner's Suffrage League as a separate entity, wage earning women maintained the facade of solidarity with the activists of the Equal Suffrage League. This act of harmonious teamwork did not permeate all suffrage leagues, nor did it carry on for the remainder of the campaign. Instead, the work of key individuals from the different classes transformed the charade carried on by suffragettes from an act to reality.<sup>[53]</sup>

Women of the upper and middle class used suffrage as a means to seek greater rights for themselves and working women. The work of Katherine Phillips Edson and Maud Younger within women's clubs and amongst union members enabled these women to reach beyond the conventions of their typical activist deeds. Each woman furthered the progress of the cross-class coalitions that WSU activists envisioned for California suffragettes during the early 1900s. The individual efforts of Edson and Younger to work on behalf of and with wage earners aided in the growth and development of the cross-class coalitions that would prove vital to the success of the state and national suffrage campaign.

Katherine Philips Edson was an extremely active member of the California suffrage movement. Born to a reform minded family in Ohio, Edson moved to California with her husband in 1891. It was in the Golden State that she discovered her desire to work as a public activist. Today, she is recognized for her role in the passage of California's minimum wage bill, which guaranteed minimum wage for men and women. Edson's work on behalf of women's rights and progressive reform began when she joined the Los Angeles Friday Morning Club in 1900. The club was founded by women's rights activist Caroline Severance, who envisioned a place exclusively for women where they could be free to discuss culture and civics. From her start with the club, Edson continued her work and joined committees of the National Municipal League, the Progressive party, and was appointed as an agent to California's Bureau of Labor. Her position within various committees allowed Edson the opportunity to bridge the gap between the world of grassroots organizations and politics on behalf of nonworking and working women alike.<sup>[54]</sup>

Edson's work as secretary then vice president of the Friday Morning Club allowed her the opportunity to experience women's concerns of the day. In Los Angeles, San Francisco, and cities across America working women were being taken advantage of by employers. It was not uncommon for a working women to be cheated out of wages for the slightest indiscretion or to be expected to work long hours in uncomfortable conditions. Discussion

of the working woman's plight would have surfaced during a Friday Morning Club meeting and indicated a rise in clubwomen's awareness of the social issues that surrounded them. Under Edson's direction, the club became a leading organization for the reformation of municipal and state agencies, political rights, labor legislation, and a number of other social issues.[\[55\]](#)

Edson's tireless work cumulated with her organization of the Political Equality League of Los Angeles. This League is responsible for having the Republican party endorse and include women's suffrage in the state platform. Edson lobbied vehemently for women's enfranchisement as she believed the ballot would allow women a greater part in "social uplift" and "upkeep". She aptly predicted a bright future for women as "...one of the very important forces in politics." Edson followed her prediction with a report on the outcome of women's suffrage less than a year after the 1911 state election.[\[56\]](#)

Presented at a convention for the National Municipal League in Los Angeles, Mrs. Edson examined the latest voting trends of Los Angeles women. She stressed the high percentage of women registered to vote, over ninety-five percent throughout the city and over fifty percent in suburban areas, and the great amount of voting activity seen from these newly registered voters. She credits the work of organizations, such as the Woman's City Club, for their efforts to engage the public in discussions of civics, economics, and politics. These clubs became the centers of public affairs in the largest cities and smallest towns throughout the state, and united women of the upper, middle, and working class. Edson's work began within the realm of grassroots leagues and eventually expanded into the realm of politics. She served as a connection between the needs of the common people and the politicians who could serve the public good, thereby strengthening California's cross-class coalitions.[\[57\]](#)

Katherine Edson's work appeased suffrage activists and wage earners in the same manner as the work of Maud Younger. Younger, as previously mentioned, came from an affluent family, yet dedicated her life to improving the lives of working women. Her work amongst the members of San Francisco's waitresses' union made it possible for Younger to realize how working women might benefit from enfranchisement. She was the crucial advocate for women's rights that encouraged the relationship between San Francisco's labor and suffrage movements. Younger's efforts to work with suffragettes and laborers personified the cross-class coalitions that would help Californian women earn the vote.[\[58\]](#)

Unlike other activists who worked on behalf of female wage earners, Younger dedicated her life to gaining a thorough understanding of the worker's situation. She worked as a waitress and chair of the Waitresses' Committee in New York for five years before returning to California in 1906. Once in San Francisco, Younger continued working with and on behalf of her laboring sisters. To encourage female union member's interest in taking up the suffrage cause Younger, along with other city suffragettes, founded the Twentieth Century Club. Opened in 1908, the club was described by local papers as "...a club for women and girls engaged in industry." In fact, the club was an attempt to attract young workers to the cause of the labor and suffrage reforms. Modeled after the prominent Century Club of San Francisco, Younger envisioned the club as one which would encourage a sense of community amongst its members.[\[59\]](#)

By 1908, Maud Younger was San Francisco's leading labor spokesperson and suffrage representative. She, and other leading working class suffragettes, were called upon at every opportunity to speak on behalf of working women and the vote. As California's suffrage campaign began to gain steam, Younger continued to advocate for the vote while stressing its' importance to working women. By speaking on behalf of working women, Younger helped her upper and middle class counterparts realize that the significance of the vote stretched beyond their social echelons. The idea that an upper class woman could help her fellow wage earning woman became yet another way in Younger helped bridge class divisions. Her work proved the success of the "California plan's" cross-class coalitions, thereby demonstrating the significance of this new suffrage model to other state and the national suffrage campaign.[\[60\]](#)

Lauren Abel

Both Edson and Younger dedicated their lives to the suffrage cause. They recognized the significance the vote held for all women and realized working women were excellent allies to the campaign. However, their attempts to reach out to female laborers proved to be biased. Edson and Younger worked from within club organizations; the very same organizations that catered to the more elite or privileged members of California's social scene also maintained specific club membership requirements. Edson's Friday Morning Club attracted Los Angeles's upper and middle class while Younger's Twentieth Century Club specifically targeted San Francisco's working women. A lingering "us" and "them" attitude hung over the campaign as the separate factions continued to work towards establishing the cross-class coalitions that would come to represent the success of the "California plan".

As the women of the suffrage movement carried on with their efforts to unite under the suffrage banner, whilst maintaining their separate identities, one woman decided to put an end to the elitist attitude of the campaign once and for all. In 1910, San Franciscan native Selina Solomons opened the Votes for Women club. This club was designed to end the idea of the "us" and "them" mentality and to reach out to suffrage activists in cities outside of San Francisco, which at the time was the heart of California's suffrage campaign. With a clear motive Solomons opened her club to women of all social classes. Although the club initially attracted a membership of working women from the surrounding area, Solomons' larger vision for the club reached as far as Southern California and facilitated the success of California's cross class alliances.[\[61\]](#)

Selina Solomons' endeavor to reach out and unite California's female activists of the ongoing suffrage campaign can be credited to her upbringing. Born to a prominent Jewish family, Solomons' family members were respected citizens. Her father founded San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El, one of the first Jewish temples built in California, her brother was a prominent Sierra-Nevada explorer and friend of nature activist John Muir, and her sister earned a medical degree and became one of the first female psychiatrists in America. Her family's accolades could have very well inspired Solomons to seek work as a social activist; however, the work of her mother seems to have held the greatest influence.[\[62\]](#)

Selina Solomons' mother was Hannah Marks Solomons, a distinguished educator in the San Francisco area. When the family faced financial difficulties, Solomons' mother became an activist in the women's movement. Seeing her involvement as an opportunity to improve her rights as a woman, Hannah Solomons became president of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU) in 1890. Formed in 1888, the WEIU's purpose was to unite the women of California. Rather than have them rely on the benevolent efforts of clubwomen, the organization sought to encourage all women to adopt "self-help" techniques to increase their rights. The objective of the WEIU can be easily identified as the underlying objective of Selina Solomons' work conducted through the Votes for Women club.[\[63\]](#)

Inspired by her mother's participation in the WEIU, Selina Solomons felt the ongoing California suffrage campaign could be improved. Solomons believed the 1896 defeat of California's suffrage amendment was a result of the divisive attitude of the activists. Although the 1896 campaign had largely been supported by California's clubwomen and unionists alike, it was not until the end of the election that the activists realized their combined efforts would have a better chance at securing the vote. However, the process of uniting the upper, middle, and working class suffragettes proved challenging as the notion of "us" and "them" permeated attempts at unification.

Katherine Philips Edson and Maud Younger worked diligently on behalf of women's suffrage, yet their efforts maintained an essence of partiality. Edson's work, although beneficial for laborers, relied on the efforts of the Friday Morning Club members. While Younger had greater knowledge of the working woman's plight, her work excluded aid from those outside the workforce. Furthermore, both women worked within their home cities and did little to connect with activists throughout the state. In Solomons' mind, these singular acts in the name of women's suffrage were hindering the campaign's progress. By 1910 Solomons decided to put an end to this standpoint and turn the outward appearance of cooperation between activists into a reality.[\[64\]](#)

Solomons' Votes for Women club was a crucial element in the success of California's cross-class coalitions. Located in San Francisco's Union Square, the club attracted members with nickel meals and a well stocked reading room. Workers and shoppers from the surrounding neighborhood could stop at the club to enjoy lunch while catching up on the latest discussions on suffrage literature. Not wanting the club to be viewed an organization for working women alone, Solomons arranged public outreach events, lectures, and forums. Although her intention was to draw attention to the working woman's plight Solomons realized that the singular efforts of working women could not secure the vote; they would need to work together with upper and middle class activists.<sup>[65]</sup>

In 1910, Solomons and her club members attended an assembly for the formation of a Women's Trade Union Label. It was here that San Francisco's working women took the opportunity to describe the conditions of their employment to Anne Morgan, daughter of the 'owner of America' J.P. Morgan. As described in Solomons' first hand account, this encounter between Miss Morgan and the working women "...seemed to bridge,...the social gulf that yawned between." Inspired by the meeting with Miss Morgan and the success of the club, Solomons decided to expand the club's influence. Rather than focus exclusively on continuing to strengthen the suffrage campaign within San Francisco, Solomons saw the flourishing organization as an opportunity to reach out to activists in other cities.<sup>[66]</sup>

Selina Solomons' determination to unite the suffrage activists of California was not the first attempt to do so. Clara Burdette's Federation of Women's Clubs in California (CFWC) was an early attempt to unite the clubwomen of California. By 1906, the federation boasted over six thousand members. While federation membership did provide an opportunity for women to enter the field of civic activism, it did not guarantee that all women would do so. In fact, few members of the CFWC were fully committed to civic projects that were meant to further the influence of club women within the public arena. Nevertheless, Burdette's federation was a step in the right direction as it facilitated greater public participation for clubwomen who chose to do their civic duty. However, the federation did not incorporate working women. This shortcoming of the CFWC is what Solomons sought to remedy in the "California plan's" emerging cross-class coalitions.<sup>[67]</sup>

The Votes for Women club's luncheons and lectures were successful at drawing audiences of working and nonworking activists alike. It created a place where these women could discuss what they believed the vote meant to them. Aside from building cross class alliances between the women of San Francisco, Solomons facilitated cooperation between women's suffrage organizations throughout the state. Since its founding, the population of California had become dispersed. By the turn of the century, Southern California, with fewer ties to the liquor industry, became a promising ally to the state's suffrage campaign. As Solomons reported, suffrage clubs and organizations throughout the state were gradually organized under a state association that sponsored local branches in different counties. This separate yet united county approach was much more akin to what Solomons envisioned for California's suffrage movement. It allowed for clubwomen and working women alike to participate in the campaign throughout the state, thereby facilitating the success of the California's cross-class coalitions.<sup>[68]</sup>

The California suffrage campaign's 1911 victory can be credited to the cross-class coalitions that inspired the "California plan". Originally initiated by the Women's Socialist Union (WSU), cross-class collaboration united the suffrage activists of the different classes. This coalition would become the defining factor that distinguished California's suffrage campaign from any other state's or even the national suffrage movement. As inspiring as this innovative development in suffrage strategy was, it was not easily established. The 1896 defeat of the women's enfranchise amendment before the state senate made suffragettes realize they could no longer avoid working with one another. The relationships forged between upper and middle class clubwomen and working women took decades to form, yet they pulled together in time to secure the vote in the 1911 state election.

The success of California's cross-class coalitions could not have been achieved without the work of several important individuals. Katherine Edson worked through Los Angeles' respected Friday Morning Club to rally her fellow club members to the working woman's plight. Maud Younger worked amongst female laborers for years before serving on their behalf as an admired activist. Both women worked for working women because they

Lauren Abel

recognized the potential the vote held for the wage earning woman. Their dedication effectively connected the women's rights movement to the struggle for the vote. In essence, Edson and Younger developed the foundation of the cross-class coalitions between California's upper, middle, and working class; however, Selina Solomons took their work a step further.

Although tremendously beneficial to the cause, the work of Edson and Younger was elitist. Edson and Younger worked exclusively with specific groups of activists, thereby maintaining the divisive notions of "us" and "them". Solomons recognized this mindset as detrimental to the movement and took action to dissuade this attitude amongst suffragettes. She encouraged activists to join and work together for each other's benefit. By utilizing modern amenities, such as the telephone and automobile, Solomons united activists from Northern and Southern California, thereby strengthening the cause and cross-class alliances throughout the state. This push to unite the suffragettes came in time to rally enough support for the passage of California's eighth amendment in October 1911 which effectively enfranchised the women of the Golden State and reinvigorated the stagnant national suffrage movement.

### **Influence on Other States and the National Suffrage Campaign**

California's suffrage victory was a great achievement that inspired suffragists throughout the nation. However, activists of the Golden State did not feel their work was over. Their victory enabled their full participation in state elections, yet they would need a federal amendment to participate in national elections. The proposed women's suffrage amendment had been continuously rejected by Congress since its first introduction by California Senator Aaron Augustus Sargent in 1878. Sargent, whose wife Ellen was a suffragette and friend of Susan B. Anthony's, represented the connection between California's suffrage campaign and the nation. His activism on behalf of women's enfranchisement tied California's campaign to the fate of the federal and other state amendments. This link between California and the remainder of the country encouraged the victorious suffrage leagues to direct their efforts to the large task at hand; obtaining the national vote.<sup>[69]</sup>

Suffrage leagues across the nation recognized the significance of California's victory. Ida Harper Husted, an East Coast suffragette, captured the importance of this gain in several published works. A contributing author of the *History of Woman Suffrage*, Husted was considered a historian of the movement. Her involvement with the campaign began in her home state of Indiana, where, in 1878, she helped organize a women's suffrage league. From there Husted joined the NAWSA and became a close colleague of Susan B. Anthony. In 1893 she was specifically chosen by Anthony to direct press coverage of California's campaign for women's enfranchisement. Husted's appointment came three years before California's 1896 state elections, which saw the first defeat of a women's franchise amendment. This early coverage of the West Coast's suffrage activities proves the national suffrage leagues began to take a keen interest in California's campaign long before the state even secured the vote.<sup>[70]</sup>

As historian of the suffrage movement, Husted wrote extensively about the campaign's gains and losses. In her writings, Husted analyzed the condition of the women's suffrage movement in numerous states, particularly those on the West Coast, and, more importantly, California. Her coverage of California's 1896 campaign demonstrated that the activists were in a difficult position. Their efforts, like those of other suffrage leagues, were hampered by corrupt business and government dealings that sought to unite all enfranchised men against a women's suffrage amendment. In spite of the less than promising conditions in which suffragettes fought for the vote, Husted identified an encouraging factor that could aid women in their struggle. Husted's 1909 *Status of Woman Suffrage in the United States* asserts that favorable attitudes from America's working man would help win the battle for women's enfranchisement. Her insight captured the latest development in the direction of California's suffrage plan, which, during the same time, began fervently recruiting working men and women to the cause.<sup>[71]</sup>

Husted's reports kept other states and the national suffrage leagues up to speed on recent developments in suffrage strategy; the greatest of which, thus far, came from California. The state's activists had done away with

their divisive attitudes and adopted the more efficient cross-class coalitions. A quote from an article Husted wrote for the *New York Tribune* epitomized the effect this Western suffrage victory had on the ongoing movement, "Now that...California, with 2,377,000, have shown their desire to put the political equality idea into practice, the pressure behind it will become more acute and the larger and older States will have to take more serious notice of its existence." California had truly put political equality to the test, not just by granting women the vote, but by establishing the cross-class alliances that united the upper, middle, and wage earning women of the state. As Husted's writings suggest, the new "California plan" had an influence on other state and the national suffrage movement.<sup>[72]</sup>

Of the now six states with full suffrage for women, California's success proved the most crucial. Unlike Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Washington, all of which granted women's suffrage before California, the Golden State had been part of the Union for over fifty years. Furthermore California also had several large cities, such as San Francisco and Los Angeles. Following the 1911 victory, these cities became the "supreme test" of woman suffrage. If suffrage legislation were to succeed in California, it might fare just as well in New York and other large states.<sup>[73]</sup>

Across America, states large and small turned to the new test of woman suffrage in California. The progress of voting Californian women was carefully monitored by active suffrage organizations throughout the nation. According to a report from the College Equal Suffrage League of Northern California, heads of numerous organizations from various states sent letters immediately after the state election of October 1911, "...asking for advice and suggestions for organizing and conducting a like campaign." During a time when the national movement remained internally divided between members of the newly formed NAWSA, the enfranchisement of California women, "...seemed to breathe new life into suffragists all over America". Numerous reports and articles published by suffragists throughout the country hailed the California campaign as a "magnificent campaign", one "...which had no rival..." and "...one of the political issues of the day."<sup>[74]</sup>

Suffrage victory in the Golden State revitalized the stagnant national suffrage movement and brought renewed hope to struggling state campaigns. The new "California plan" model bolstered the suffrage campaigns of neighboring Western states. Cross-class coalitions of California's women inspired similar alliances in the NAWSA; the league finally recognized the effectiveness of the new model in garnering support need to enfranchise women. The united efforts of upper class, middle class, and working class women resulted in a successful campaign that influenced other state and national suffrage leagues. In granting women the vote, California's victory revitalized the static national campaign that would later secure a federal women's suffrage amendment.

## Conclusion

The American suffrage movement was one of the longest civil rights campaigns in the history of the United States. For a grueling seventy two years, women throughout the country struggled against political and cultural conventions to achieve their goal. Their crusade endured opposition from all sides, and from within their own ranks. The campaign nearly came to a standstill when the nation's leading suffrage organization, the AERA, split in 1869. It would be another twenty one years before the AWSA and NWSA agreed to reunite and form the NAWSA in 1890. This reunion did not mark the end of disagreement between suffragettes regarding the appropriate suffrage model to adopt in order to continue their work. Instead, it would take an encouraging victory from the West Coast to inspire other states and the national campaign to adopt the innovative "California plan".<sup>[75]</sup>

Successful collaboration between various classes of Californian women greatly influenced suffrage movements in other states, as well as the national campaign. An article from the NAWSA stated the league "...recognized that it needed working-class support in order to win total suffrage for women." Middle and upper class work alone were not enough to ensure the vote. This realization resulted in renewed efforts by suffrage leagues to interest working women into becoming activists. Greater civil rights and the improved ability to take charge of their "women's work" were stressed as benefits of their participation in the suffrage campaign.<sup>[76]</sup>

Lauren Abel

The effect the Golden State had on achieving women's rights is apparent throughout American history. After 1920, now armed with the ability to vote in state and federal elections, women across the country continued to advocate for improved civil rights. The suffrage movement had effectively galvanized the women's rights movements that would permeate much of the twentieth century. While achieving the vote was a great success for women, it did not deliver the equality it had promised. As author Ruth Ashby indicates, "Women still had neither the privileges nor the responsibilities of men in the public sphere: not in politics, business, religion, the economy, the military, or the arts...,women were at best subordinate..."<sup>[77]</sup>

Since the suffrage movement, women have continued to fight for their basic rights. Throughout the twentieth century, women have fought for improved property, marital, labor, and health rights. Women have since gained many of the rights they sought during the suffrage movement and then some; yet they still have ground to cover in some fields. Women remain underrepresented in institutions that govern countries, customs, and faiths. Yet, in spite of this opposition, women continue to adhere to Susan B. Anthony's principle, "Away with your man-visions! Women propose to reject them all, and begin to dream dreams for themselves." With their own dreams in mind, women have continued to advance their position in societies around the world. None of this progress from over the past ninety years would have been possible if women had not been granted the vote. Had it not been for the encouraging "California plan", the national suffrage movement might have been further jeopardized or abandoned altogether.<sup>[78]</sup>

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<sup>[2]</sup> Andrea Moore Kerr, "White Women's Rights, Black Men's Wrongs, Free Love, Blackmail, and the Formation of the American Woman Suffrage Association," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995), 65-70.

<sup>[3]</sup> Wheeler, *One Woman*, p. 65-70.; Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman*, p. xi-xvi.

<sup>[4]</sup> Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995), p. 9-11.

<sup>[5]</sup> Ibid., *One Woman*, p. 9-11.

<sup>[6]</sup> Wheeler, *One Woman*, p. 12-14.

<sup>[7]</sup> Mary Gray Peck, *The Rise of the Woman* (Chicago: M.S Hartshorn, 1911) p. 3.; National American Woman Suffrage Association, "Woman Suffrage: Arguments and Results, 1910-1911" (article, Kraus Reprint Company, 1971).; Gayle Gullett, *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-1911* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000) p. 40-51.; Maud Younger, "Why Wage-Earning Women Should Vote" (article, California Equal Suffrage Association, 1911) p. 1-2.; Susan Englander, *Class Conflict and Class Coalition in the California Woman Suffrage Movement, 1907-1912: The San Francisco Wage Earner's Suffrage League* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992) p.7-8.; College Equal Suffrage League, "Suggested Work for College Chapters, City Leagues, and the Executive Secretary" (article, 1912).; Sherry J. Katz, "A Politics of Coalition: Socialist Women and the California Suffrage Movement, 1894-1909," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995), 245-261.

<sup>[8]</sup> Beverly Beeton, "How the West Was Won for Woman Suffrage," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995), 99-116.

<sup>[9]</sup> Ibid., *One Woman*, p. 245-261.

<sup>[10]</sup> Robert Cooney, *Winning the Vote: The Triumph of the American Woman Suffrage Movement* (Santa Cruz: American Graphic Press, 2005).; Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1975).

<sup>[11]</sup> Rebecca J. Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p. 147, 171-173.

<sup>[12]</sup> Gullett, *Becoming Citizens*, 201-206.

- [13] Peck, *The Rise of the Woman*, p. 3; Mary Austin and Anne Martin, "Suffrage and Government: The Modern Idea of Government by Consent and Woman's Place in it, with special reference to Nevada and other Western States" (article, Nevada Equal Franchise Society, 1914).
- [14] National American Woman Suffrage Association, "Woman Suffrage", p. 35-38.
- [15] Selina Solomons, *How We Won the Vote in California: A True Story of the Campaign of 1911* (San Francisco: New Woman Publishing Company, 1912).; Elaine Elinson, "S.F. women helped forge suffrage victory in state," *San Francisco Gate*, October 9, 2011.; Katherine Phillips Edson (Mrs. Charles Farwell), "The Actual Operation of Woman's Suffrage in California" (presentation, National Municipal League, Los Angeles, July 1912).; Letters received and sent by Laura deForce Gordon, 1856-1882. Box 1-2. Laura Gordon Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California-Berkeley, Berkeley, California.
- [16] Gullet, *Becoming Citizens*, p. 117-119, 2-9.
- [17] *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 1900.; Gullet, *Becoming Citizens*, p. 116.
- [18] Gullet, *Becoming Citizens*, p. 114-122.; Mead, *How the Vote was Won*, p. 74.
- [19] Gullet, *Becoming Citizens*, p. 130, 133-137.
- [20] *Ibid.*, p. 130, 133-137.
- [21] Gullett, *Becoming Citizens*, p. 139-141.
- [22] *Ibid.*, p. 119-126.; Wheeler, *One Woman*, p. 245.
- [23] Wheeler, *One Woman*, p. 245-247.
- [24] *Ibid.*, p. 247-249, 254-257.
- [25] *Ibid.*, p. 246, 254-258.
- [26] Wheeler, *One Woman.*, p.245-247, 249-254.
- [27] *Ibid.*, *One Woman*, p. 247-251.
- [28] Gullet, *Becoming Citizens*, p. 116.
- [29] *Ibid.*, p. 117-119.; *Los Angeles Capital*, Aug. 2, 1901.; *San Francisco Examiner*, Sunday Magazine, Mar. 3, 1901.
- [30] Gullet, *Becoming Citizens*, p. 29-32.; *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 24, 1891.
- [31] Gullet, *Becoming Citizens*, p. 29-32.
- [32] *Ibid.*, p.168-169.; Mrs. Florence Collins Porter, "Convention of the Los Angeles County Equal Suffrage League," *Yellow Ribbon* 1 (Nov. 1906): 3.
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- [37] College Equal Suffrage League, "Suggested Work for College Chapters, City Leagues, and the Executive Secretary" (article, 1912).
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Lauren Abel

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Lauren Abel