One-hundred seventy-one years ago this month, the first women’s rights convention was held in the relatively new United States of America. Though the country’s founding documents and officials touted liberty and justice and representative government, those things weren’t for all. The reality of life in the fledgling U.S. fell short of those lofty ideals for women and people of color. They were left out of that big picture in the fine print for too many years to come and suffered, mightily, for lack of constitutional protections and enforcements.

The coming year will see commemorations and anniversaries of two remedies:

The centennial of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guaranteed the right to vote for women, and the 55th anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which enforced the right of people of color to vote in the U.S.

Groups throughout the city and region are planning events and activities to mark these milestones of monumental changes in U.S. history, civic life and society.

This newsletter will keep you posted on what’s happening and when, and how you can be part of it, too. There have been and will be speakers and conversations and events, opportunities to learn from the past in order to celebrate those who brought us this far, and to continue their efforts with our own for a better, brighter future for even more of us. To add your event to the calendar, please click HERE.

You can find the Declaration of Sentiments signed at that first women’s rights convention held July 19-20,1848, in Seneca Falls, N.Y. linked above. You can find the body of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution by clicking HERE.

---

Voting Rights Act

Starting with this newsletter and leading up to its anniversary next summer, we also will be including an additional heading for information about the Voting Rights Act.

Some background from ourdocuments.gov: “This act was signed into law on Aug. 6, 1965, by President Lyndon Johnson. It outlawed the discriminatory voting practices adopted in many Southern states after the Civil War, including literacy tests as a prerequisite to voting.

“This act to enforce the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution’ was signed into law 95 years after the amendment was ratified. In those years, African
Americans in the South faced tremendous obstacles to voting, including poll taxes, literacy tests, and other bureaucratic restrictions to deny them the right to vote. They also risked harassment, intimidation, economic reprisals, and physical violence when they tried to register or vote. As a result, very few African Americans were registered voters, and they had very little, if any, political power, either locally or nationally ...

To read more about the Voting Rights Act, click HERE

Remembering Unita Blackwell

Contemporary observations are reclaiming history’s heroines and heroes who dedicated their lives to making and bringing about the change they wanted to see, and wanted to bequeath to those who came after them.

One of those heroines was Unita Blackwell, the daughter of Mississippi sharecroppers who became the first African-American woman to be elected mayor in her state.

According to the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, only 3 percent of voting-age blacks were registered to vote in the early 1960s in Mississippi.

Unita Blackwell recalled that she didn’t even know she had the right to vote until SNCC activists showed up in her town of Mayersville. She was one of eight African Americans who took the registration exams as they tried to register to vote in her county; the county registrar failed all of them. “You didn’t pass those tests,” she said.

Soon she went to work for SNCC as a field secretary, organizing efforts to register voters and to end school desegregation. It led to a lifelong dedication to civil rights activism, for which she was lauded when she died at the age of 86 in May.

“I don’t think most people today — younger people especially — have any idea of the price that ordinary black Mississippians have paid,” she once said.

One of the purposes of the events leading up to the 55th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act is to fill in as many blanks as possible, of the ordinary and the extraordinary.

To read more about Unita Blackwell, click HERE
Save the date for Women’s Equality Day celebration!

**Date:** Aug. 24  
**Place:** Frazier History Museum, 829 W. Main St., Louisville  
**Time:** 10 to 10:30 a.m., networking and shopping  
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. program  
more details to come in the next newsletter

**Sponsors:** Office for Women, Louisville; League of Women Voters of Louisville; Frazier History Museum  
**Theme:** Vote = Power

**Keynote Speaker:** Coline Jenkins, great-great granddaughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention, mentioned above, and American suffragist and abolitionist

Admission to the Women’s Equality Day celebration is **free**.

A welcoming event for Jenkins on the evening of Aug. 23, with wine and light refreshments is $25 in advance, $30 at the door. [Reserve your spot for the welcoming event](#)
More information about Women’s Equality Day in the August newsletter!

Also coming in the August newsletter: Frazier History Museum performers talk about portraying Suffragists.

---

Stay in the loop!

We’re here to keep you in the loop about the Women Vote 100 commemoration.

- Don’t forget the “cultural pass” available to schoolchildren of Metro Louisville, Bullitt County, and Southern Indiana. The program, now in its fifth year, offers one-time general admission to about 40 participating venues from June 1 through Aug. 10. The purpose is to promote the arts and culture for children, and to provide education and stimulation to students while they’re out of school. To find out more about the program, click here

- The above details and more are found on the Women Vote 100 calendar that will be updated and kept throughout the commemoration.

- We encourage your organization to add an event to the calendar

- To get an idea of what has been planned for 2020, please read this overview by Penny Peavler, president and CEO of the Frazier History Museum.

- And, of course, please keep current with the calendar and if you would like your voice heard, fill out our form!

- Sign up to receive our monthly newsletter!

---

fun facts

More people signed the Declaration of Sentiments than the Declaration of Independence

100 people signed the Declaration of Sentiments. The Declaration of Independence had 56 signatures.

---

DID YOU KNOW?

---
The History Channel reports:

“At the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, N.Y., a woman’s rights convention – the first ever held in the United States – convenes with almost 200 women in attendance. The convention was organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, two abolitionists who met at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. As women, Mott and Stanton were barred from the convention floor, and the common indignation that this aroused in both of them was the impetus for their founding of the women’s rights movement in the United States. “In 1848, at Stanton’s home near Seneca Falls, the two women, working with Martha Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, and Jane Hunt, sent out a call for a women’s conference to be held at Seneca Falls.

The announcement, published in the Seneca County Courier on July 14, read, ‘A Convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women will be held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, N.Y., on Wednesday and Thursday, the 19th and 20th of July current ...” “ ... On July 19, 200 women convened at the Wesleyan Chapel, and Stanton read the ‘Declaration of Sentiments and Grievances,’ a treatise that she had drafted over the previous few days. Stanton’s declaration was modeled closely on the Declaration of Independence, and its preamble featured the proclamation, ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights...” It would take another 72 years to secure the “inalienable” right to vote for women in the United States.

Wise Words

One of the speakers at Seneca Falls was Frederick Douglass, the former slave and abolitionist who became one of the nation’s greatest activists, advocates and statesmen for suffrage, equal rights and human rights. At the 1848 convention, he said, “We hold woman to be justly entitled to all we claim for man. We go farther, and express our conviction that all political rights which it is expedient for man to exercise, it is equally so for women.”