

COLLECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

Equal Suffrage and the Negro Vote flyer, ca. 1915

EQUAL SUFFRAGE AND THE NEGRO VOTE

The opponents of equal suffrage claim that the negro woman's vote will constitute a menace to white supremacy. This contention is altogether unfounded for the following reasons:

1. BECAUSE under the proposed amendment to the Constitution the same restrictions, which now apply to men must also apply to women and as these qualifications restrict the negro man's vote, it stands to reason that they will also restrict the negro woman's vote.
2. BECAUSE there are 191,000 more white women of voting age in Virginia than there are negro women of voting age, and white women outnumber negro men and women put together by 31,407. So the enfranchisement of Virginia women would increase white supremacy.
3. BECAUSE white supremacy would be further increased by the literacy test. The Constitution says, in reference to qualification of the voter that "unless physically unable, he make application in his own handwriting," and that he "prepare and deposit his ballot without aid." Illiteracy among negroes is 22 per cent. and among white people is only 8 per cent.
4. BECAUSE the Constitution says that the would-be voter shall pay a poll tax of one dollar and fifty cents "for three years next preceding that in which he offers to register." This qualification further increases the white supremacy, as there are comparatively few negroes who meet their money obligations three years in advance.
5. BECAUSE the Constitution further says that "the General Assembly may prescribe a property qualification of not exceeding two hundred and fifty dollars for voters in any county, city or town," etc. (See Article II, Sec. 30, Elective Franchise and Qualification for Office.) This is a provision to be used if needed, but it has never been needed anywhere in Virginia, for there is no county or city or town where negro men qualify in larger numbers than white men. They are shut out by the present restrictions. We are secure from negro domination now—then, even more.

VOTE "YES" ON THE EQUAL SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT
LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE THE ISSUE.

EQUAL SUFFRAGE LEAGUE OF VIRGINIA,
Commercial Building, Richmond, Virginia.



ERA

Early 20th Century, Jim Crow

THEMES

Lost Cause Myth, Politics

CITATION

Equal Suffrage and the Negro Vote flyer, ca. 1915, V.89.25, The Valentine

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. Who gets to vote? Who decides that?
2. Who is the audience for this flyer circa 1915?
3. Why was the flyer created?

CONTEXT

The Equal Suffrage League (ESL) of Virginia was created in 1909 to get a state amendment passed granting women the right to vote. Around 1915, anti-suffragists argued that African-American women would dominate at the polls if legislators voted for women's suffrage. The all-white ESL issued this handbill with a counterargument, claiming that allowing women to vote "would increase white supremacy."

Some ESL members privately expressed concern about the treatment of African-American women. But, publicly the group tried to use racism to their advantage, arguing that "we are secure from negro domination." The state amendment never passed, but a federal amendment gave women the vote in 1920.

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