

Women and the Vote: Franchise Struggles, 100 Years and Counting

During 2020 we celebrate the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution and its guarantee of suffrage for women. We also reflect on the continuing struggles to ensure access to voting for all in the US and around the world.

Films and Websites about Women's Suffrage and Voting

This listing includes what we could easily find about availability on various platforms and at UM; it is not exhaustive. The text is taken from advertising language and is not evaluative.

What really happened: Votes for women (about women's suffrage in New Zealand)

<https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/votes-for-women-what-really-happened-2012?collection=pioneering-women>

Netflix DVD

Not for ourselves alone: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony (PBS)

Two women. One allegiance. Together they fought for women everywhere, and their strong willpower and sheer determination still ripples through contemporary society. Recount the trials, tribulations and triumphs of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony as they strive to give birth to the women's movement. Not until their deaths was their shared vision of women's suffrage realized.

<https://www.pbssocal.org/programs/not-for-ourselves-alone/full-episodes/>

Askwith Film Library; Netflix DVD

One woman, one vote. (PBS)

How could America call itself the world's greatest democracy, but continue to deny the right to vote to more than half of its citizens? This program documents the struggle which culminated in the passing of the 19th Amendment in the U.S. Senate by one vote. Witness the 70-year struggle for women's suffrage. Discover why the crusaders faced entrenched opposition from men and women who feared the women's vote would ignite a social revolution.

Askwith Film Library; Netflix DVD

From Suffrage on Screen: Five Vital Films about How Women Won the Vote (fifth not really about suffrage)

From: <https://rightsinfo.org/suffrage-screen-five-films-watch-100-years-since-uk-women-got-vote/>

- **The Divine Order** (about women's suffrage in Switzerland)

On a day that marks 100 years since women got the right to vote here in the UK, it is worth being reminded that for many countries such results came much later. *The Divine Order* takes as its subject matter the suffrage movement in Switzerland, where women got the right to vote in 1971 – more than 50 years after the equivalent right had passed in the UK. Unlike *Suffragette*, this film takes a lighter, feel-good approach to the suffrage story.

The film catapults its protagonist Nora (played by Marie Leuenberger) from quiet and dutiful housewife to leader of the town's suffragette movement, picking up various characters – including a feisty old widow and an Italian restaurant owner – along the way. Unafraid to add humour, the film is both amusing and inspiring. A reminder that the most powerful and significant political movements are often underscored by everyday, local and individual acts of rebellion.

<https://umich.kanopy.com/video/divine-order>

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=the+divine+order

- **Suffragette**

This roundup would not be worth its weight if we didn't kick off with the major motion picture, *Suffragette*. Starring a full sweep of acting royalty (Carey Mulligan, Meryl Streep, Helena Bonham Carter, AND Anne-Marie Duff) the film was met with widespread [critical acclaim](#) and did an important job of placing the suffrage movement, and human rights more broadly, on the big screen. The film starts in 1912 – four years before the passing of the [Representation of the People Act](#).

For anybody who thinks the suffragettes were about rosettes and tea parties, this film is a wake-up call. The film doesn't shrink away from the darker side of the suffrage movement either – the bombing of pillar boxes, cutting of telegraph wires, hunger strikes, force-feeding, and the death of Emily Davidson at the Epsom Derby in 1913, all feature in the film. Frankly, it's hard to believe that until *Suffragette* nobody had ever taken the story of the British suffragette movement and made it into a blockbuster such as this. A must-watch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WgrqnSnsWQ>

Askwith Film Library; Netflix DVD

- **Iron Jawed Angels**

Iron Jawed Angels takes its name from Massachusetts Representative Joseph Walsh, who [in 1917](#) declared that creating a committee to consider women's suffrage would be to yield to the “nagging of iron-jawed angels”. The film focuses on two suffrage leaders in the United States, [Alice Paul](#) (played by Hilary Swank) and [Lucy Burns](#) (played by Frances O'Connor). The two women first met in England, where they were both involved in the women's suffrage efforts led by Emmeline and Christine Pankhurst, and on their return to the United States joined the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

Adopting many of the suffrage tactics that were being used in the UK suffrage movement, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns were both instrumental advocates that helped to secure passage of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution which granted women the right to vote in 1920. Although *Iron Jawed Angels* did not receive the same blockbuster

status as *Suffragette*, the film received [critical acclaim](#) and a standing ovation at its Sundance Film Festival premiere.

Askwith Film Library; Netflix DVD

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOrD0tH_WaM

- **Selma**

Across the world the fight for suffrage has been an ongoing battle. The passing of legislation such as the UK's Representation of the People Act, or the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution, is never the end of the story. It is for this very reason that *Selma* makes it into our film roundup.

In 1965, forty-five years after the passing of the 19th Amendment, three marches were held along the highway from Selma, Alabama to the capital Montgomery, led by Martin Luther King (played brilliantly by David Oyelowo). The marches protested the issue of African-American citizens (men and women) being denied their constitutional right to vote.

Legislature passed in Alabama and elsewhere throughout the American South had required payment of a poll tax, the passing of a literacy test, and comprehension of the US constitution – which disenfranchised most black Americans and many poor whites, excluding them from their right to vote. The film was met with some [controversy](#) about its historical accuracy but remains an important and stark reminder of the ongoing battle that characterises suffrage and the exercise of human rights.

Askwith Film Library. Netflix DVD

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Abkka8Vf2_M

Documentaries about Vote Suppression

- **Suppressed: The right to vote.** <https://www.bravenewfilms.org/suppressed>

Weaves together personal stories from voters across Georgia to paint an undeniable picture of voter suppression in the 2018 midterm election where Stacey Abrams fought to become the first Black female governor in the U.S. The issues Georgians faced included polling place closures, voter purges, missing absentee ballots, extreme wait times and a host of voter ID issues—all of which disproportionately prevented many students and people of color from voting.

<https://www.bravenewfilms.org/suppressed>

- **Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook**

Narrated by Jeffrey Wright, *Rigged* chronicles how the right to vote is being undercut by a decade of dirty tricks—including the partisan use of gerrymandering and voter purges, and the gutting of the Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court. The film captures real-time voter purges in North Carolina and voter intimidation in Texas.

Amazon

- **The Great Hack**

Explore how a data company named Cambridge Analytica came to symbolize the dark side of social media in the wake of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election

Netflix streaming

Websites

Vote suppression: ACLU <https://www.aclu.org/issues/voting-rights/fighting-voter-suppression>

Votes for Women at the Smithsonian <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/votes-for-women>

Votes for Women at the National Portrait Gallery <https://npg.si.edu/exhibition/votes-for-women>

The Suffragist at the National Museum of American History
<https://americanhistory.si.edu/topics/womens-history/pages/suffragist>

Votes for Women 100 <https://votesforwomen100.org>

Women's suffrage and the media <http://suffrageandthemedias.org/>

19th Amendment Centennial of Women's Right to Vote (American Bar Association):
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/Programs/19th-amendment-centennial/

Interviews with historian Martha Jones, on the role of African American women in the suffrage movement, recent pieces that draw from her forthcoming book about the pivotal role of African American women in the U.S. suffrage movement:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/how-daughters-and-granddaughters-former-slaves-secured-voting-rights-all-180971660/>

2020 Women's Vote Centennial: <https://www.2020centennial.org>

And an interview with her on this subject:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/bold-accomplishments-women-color-need-be-bigger-part-suffrage-history-180971756/>