The African American and the Woman Suffrage Movement

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Abstract:

Why was the struggle for the franchise for African Americans and for African American women in particular so difficult? There is no simple answer to the question, but records reveal that several leading factors, including racial, gender, and class discrimination, as well as partisan interests, all played an important role of African American men and women not having the right to vote. This unit will provide teachers and students with the opportunity to analyze and explore many aspects of this important struggle, which despite great progress still continues today.

Although women did not receive the vote via the 15th Amendment in 1870, they were enfranchised in a few states in the late 19th century; many more in the early 20th century; and the 19th Amendment, which went into effect in 1920, meant that women were eligible to vote everywhere in the U.S. after then. African American women, however, often still found themselves disfranchised by literacy tests, lengthy residency requirements, poll taxes and a host of other racially discriminatory devices that were not eliminated until the end of the 1960’s.

This unit is recommended for high school use, and it can be adapted for other grade levels.