



Opening Quote: *"If we learn from the experience, there is no failure, only delayed victory."*
Carrie Chapman Catt

This is one of her more enlightened comments that is still relevant to the League today. I say enlightened because as we learn more about League history, we know that she was a walking contradiction, and that character trait carry over into the organizational culture.

So the POWER of our story must be that we tell the COMPLETE story.

Thank you to all of you in this room who carry the League message on a daily basis and will continue to do so as you shape the League's future. Knowledge is POWER.

The power in our story comes from remembering EVERYTHING



2020

WHY This story? WHY now ? WHY me? WHY you?

THIS IS A PERFECT TIME TO MAKE SURE THAT THE STORY WE TELL IS ACCURATE, AND ENCOMPASSES THE STORIES OF ALL OF OUR MEMBERS- Of course we are looking through 21st century eyes

We live in interesting times, times in which race and gender are still at the forefront of our conversations- in society and in our most sacred institutions such as the League. As the nation prepares to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment, much attention will be given to organizations that served as the foundation of the women's suffrage movement, organization such as the League of Women Voters. Although women of color have always made significant contributions, their contributions, particularly as it relates to the League of Women Voters have been relegated to the footnotes. Conversations of race and gender and how organizations reconcile their actions regarding these issue are more important now, than ever. How do we recognize the history of the moment without forgetting the stories of the movement that led us to this place.

There are lessons to be drawn from the history of the League of Women Voters, its exclusion and inclusion of black women, and how their contributions are acknowledged or ignored in the League's existing histories.



What story is being told by this photo? Whatever the story it is not the complete story- it does not reflect the hard decisions that were made, the complexity of the conversations that took place.

NYT editorial “The Racism Behind Women’s Suffrage, July 29, 2018- no surprise- BUT I was pleasantly surprised when Chris Carson and Virginia Kase wrote a response on behalf of the organization both acknowledging our shortcomings and pledging to DO BETTER.

Excerpts from the editorial add the missing dimension to the story of this photo

“Its worst offenses may be that it rendered nearly invisible the black women who labored in the suffragist vineyard and that it looked away from the racism that tightened the grip on the fights for the women’s vote in the years after the civil war.

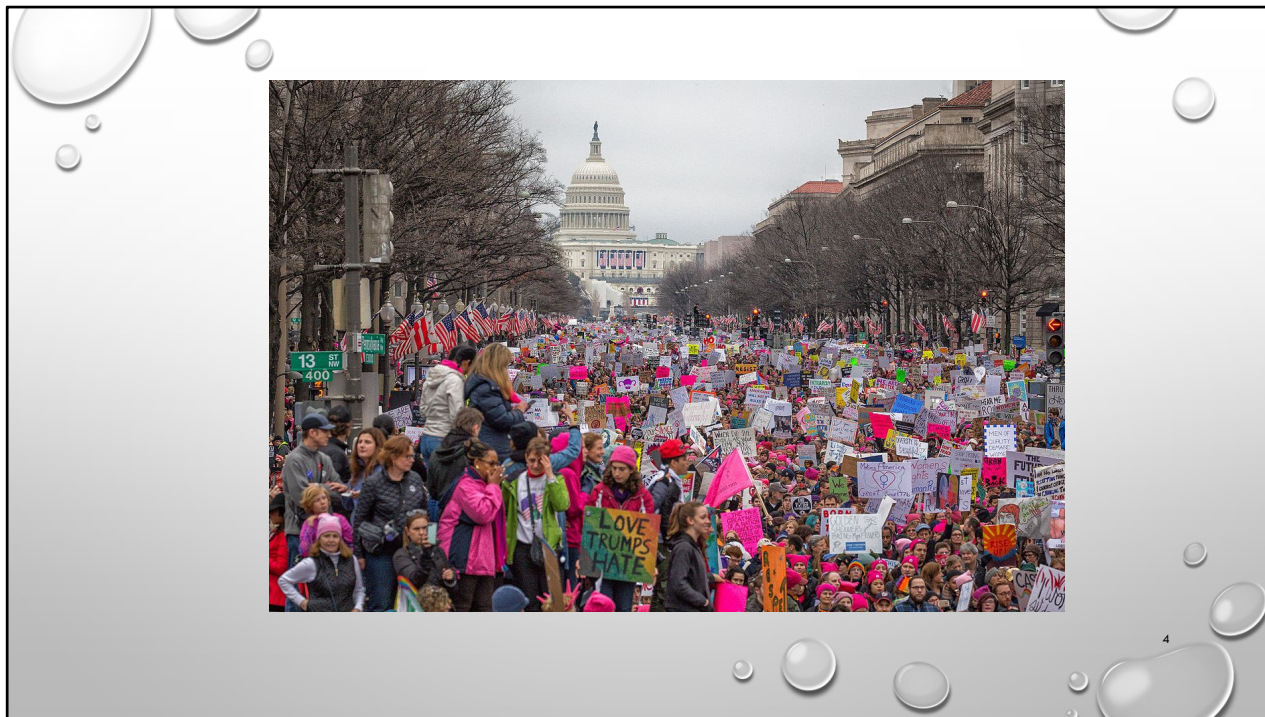
.. and selling out the interests of African-American women- when it became politically expedient to do so. This betrayal of trust opened a rift between black and white feminists that persists to this day.

What the photo does not show is the heroism of Ida B. Wells- Barnett of the Alpha Suffrage Club of Chicago, Illinois had an integrated delegation- League leader Grace Trout acquiesced to national leader’s insistence that blacks march together in the rear. Wells-Barnett refused.

If we truly believe that in history everyone’s story deserves to be told, we need to stop using this photo as the lone symbol of our efforts.

How do we recognize the history of the moment?

How do we get from picture 1 to picture 2? By telling the full story. That there were strategic decisions and intentional efforts to marginalize the contributions of women of color, but through their passion, sense of purpose and perseverance, they have made the League of Women Voters a better organization over the years.



Would you see these women in the story of the Suffrage Parade or in this photo of a more inclusive 21st century women's rights protest? How do we, as an organization, get here?

The universal themes of women's struggles and perseverance in politics and policy. There are certain truisms we must accept- the League has always struggled with issues of race.

If the League is to be true to its mission, it must recognize these issues and make an intentional effort to address them.

I was warned that this topic might be uncomfortable

This won't be the first time a League discussion or action has made people uncomfortable.

The notion of women having the right to vote made people uncomfortable and still does

The abolishment of slavery made people uncomfortable

School desegregation made people uncomfortable and still does

Being called a communist made people uncomfortable

Women in leadership , being bosses made people uncomfortable and still does

Integrated military makes people uncomfortable and still does

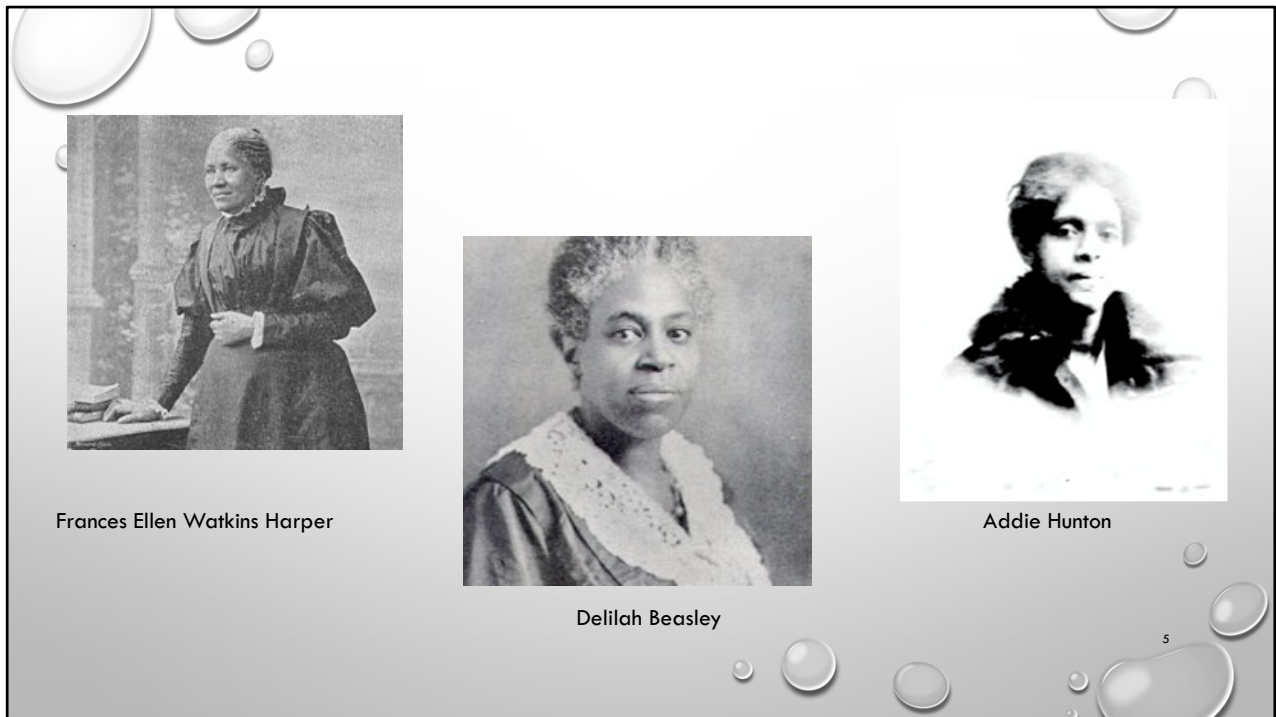
There are consequences if we choose to remain comfortable

CHANGE IS COMPLICATED BUT NECESSARY!

This is more than just an intellectual exercise.

Being uncomfortable forces movement.

Appreciate the full history of the organization and have the hard conversations about doing better.



Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Delilah Beasley

Addie Hunton

Addie Hunton and a group of colored women proposed to the League leaders at the 1921 Convention in Cleveland, that the League assist colored women in achieving the full privileges of suffrage. Because of the threat by southern delegates to walk out if she was allowed to present her proposal before the delegate body, the Board decided to hear the proposal separately, and rather than bring it before delegates for a vote, decided to make an executive decision to establish the Special Committee on the Study of the Negro Problem, which they considered an appropriate compromise. Mrs. Hunton was notified of the decision by letter. An executive decision was made not to fund the committee, not to publicize its activities and not to assign it to one of the League's standing committees.

Delilah Beasley of the Oakland Tribune had an ongoing conversation with the national leadership about integration in the League's membership. The women in her area struggled with the questions of why they had to belong to a segregated League if they chose to participate in the League and as all women of color had to make a decision about where to best direct their energies.

Beasley communicated most frequently with Mrs. Warren Wheaton Press Secretary whom she had met in person and who agree to advocate on Beasley's behalf.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper- abolitionist and suffragist



Ida B. Wells-Barnett



Mary Church Terrell



Nannie Helen Burroughs

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Ida B. Wells- Barnett

Mary Church Terrell who wrote “A colored woman in a white world” was a frequent speaker at League conventions in her role with Colored Women’s clubs. While she was a longstanding member of the League, she was not afforded the full rights and privileges of other League members.

Nannie Helen Burroughs gave a speech 1900 National Baptist Convention “How the Sisters are hindered from helping”.



Mary McLeod Bethune



Dr. Dorothy Height

The League has always had a transactional relationship with the National Association of Colored Women which later became the National Council of Negro Women. Records of convention indicate that a representative was always invited as a special guest.

We could find common language around common causes, yet were invisible in plain sight.

The struggle that the League had was a struggle for meaning- a sense of who we are as an organization over the long haul.

The concept of intersectionality posed double jeopardy.

Three significant periods where League had most activity in the race conversation

Transactional not transformational

1926-27 Indian problem became a conversation- 2 years after Indians were consider citizens Indian citizenship Act of 1924 Special Committee on Indian Problems

1927 3 colored Leagues in California, 1 in Chicago, 1 in St. Louis, 1 in Tacoma, Washington

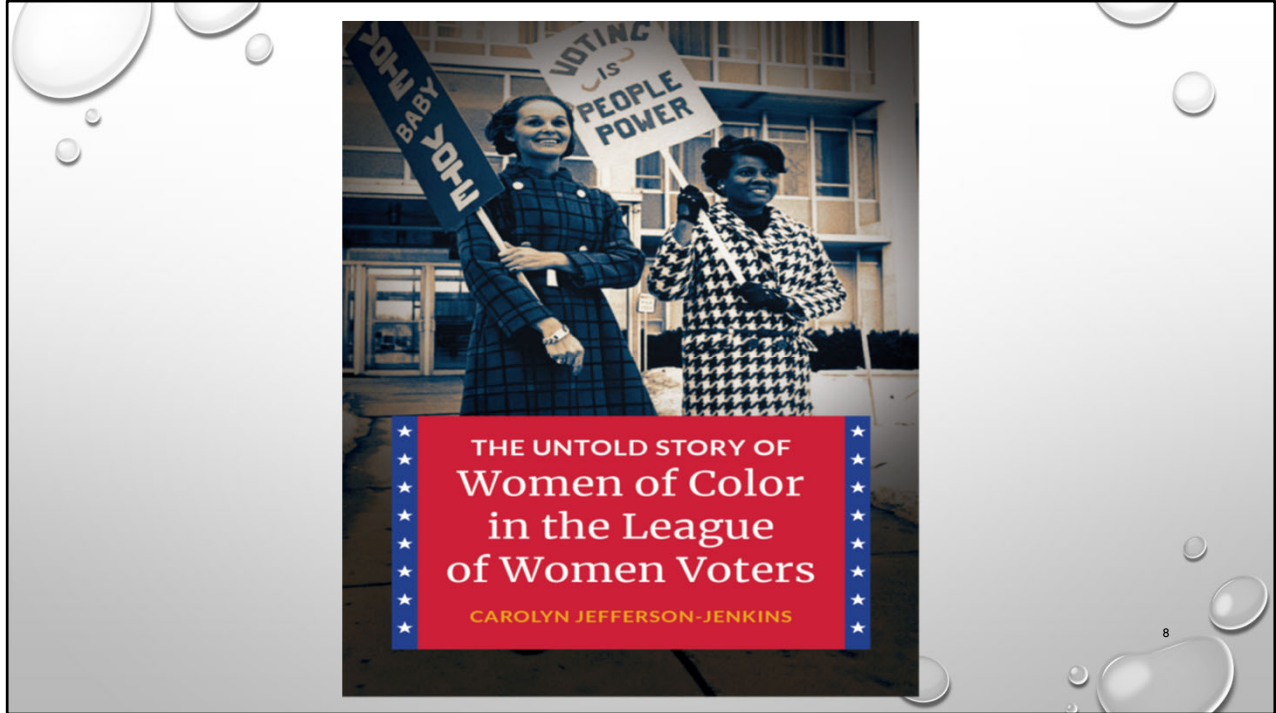
1950s response to Brown v. Board of Education conclusion that separate was not equal and that school integration should occur with all deliberate speed.

Practical or Principled?

1953 "How to get and Keep Members" question of Negro membership arose

1954 Atlanta Conference of Southern league Presidents

1990s emphasis on diversity



1970 League Event Flint Michigan

This book discusses the origin and the evolution of the League's attitude – reflected in its policies and practices – toward the inclusion of women of color into the organization. It presents an accurate and respectful record of the strategic choices the organization made in its relationship with its members of color, while highlighting the contributions these women made. It will serve as a template to motivate state and local Leagues in researching their own histories.

The relationship between the League and its members of color has been an interesting study in contrasts between principle and practicality

Tells the stories of some names you know and some you don't know

After the passage of the 19th amendment, things did not change for women of color as the organization transitioned from the National American Woman's Suffrage Association into the League of Women Voters.

The League of Women Voters marginalized the contributions of women of color in its first 100 years. Telling their story now obliges the organization to take a candid look at itself and do better for the next 100 years.

Our past shouldn't define our future- even though it is a predictor of the future, it does not have to be a determinant- we have a choice!

THE UNTOLD STORY

- **LEST WE FORGET**

- WE WERE THERE TOO!
- THE NEGRO'S HOUR
- A DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN RACE AND GENDER
- A CYCLE OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND SETBACKS

- **TO FINISH THE FIGHT**

- AN "EVERYWOMAN'S " ORGANIZATION
- BETWEEN PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICALITY

- **FOR THE SAKE OF THE CAUSE**

- BOTH CUSTOMARY AND INSTITUTIONAL
- STRATEGIC DECISIONS
- REFORMISTS RATHER THAN REVOLUTIONARIES

The League was an organization of white women of privilege- there were also black women of privilege.

Challenges that put the League to the test- examples.

Relationships have always been more transactional than transformational.

Tensions between being transactional and transformation, practical or principled? This worked both ways. Women of color joined the League "For the Sake of the Cause"

The League had a public face and a private face

Chapter titles reflect the ideology of women of color in their quest to be "full" members of the League of Women Voters.

THE UNTOLD STORY

- **THROUGH AMBER COLORED GLASSES**
 - TWO REALITIES
 - HOPE AMIDST HOLLOW CLAIMS OF PROGRESS
 - TURNING POINTS
- **THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY**
 - EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION
 - A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE
- **THE UNFINISHED FIGHT**
 - POSSIBILITIES, HOPES AND DREAMS

Lest we Forget- focuses on the need for a comprehensive history

To Finish the Fight- focuses on League founding and the dissonance between its values and principles in actual operation. It shows the contradiction in its belief that it is an “every woman’s” organization

For the Sake of The Cause- focuses on why women of color sought membership and affiliation with the League even though their participation was discouraged

Through Amber Colored glasses- focuses on equal rights versus equal opportunities- realistic view of an imperfect organization

The Weight of History- my story

The Unfinished Fight- diversity, equity and inclusion in the next 100 years

LEAGUE TRIVIA FACTS

- WHO IS THE ONLY PERSON OF COLOR TO SERVE AS THE LWV NATIONAL PRESIDENT?
- AT WHICH CONVENTION WAS THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE STUDY OF THE NEGRO PROBLEM ESTABLISHED?
- IN WHAT YEAR WAS THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE DISBANDED?
- WHEN WAS THE FIRST NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL ABOUT THE LEAGUE AND ISSUES OF RACE PUBLISHED?
- AT WHICH CONVENTION DID DELEGATES ADOPT A POLICY TO NOT SCHEDULE LEAGUE MEETINGS AT HOTELS THAT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST COLORED DELEGATES?
- WHICH STATE LEAGUE LODGED A FORMAL COMPLAINT WITH NATIONAL LEAGUE ABOUT TREATMENT OF ITS MEMBERS BY HOTELS IN THEIR AREA?

Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins

1921 Cleveland

Was never funded and as part of its establishment Board agreed to not publicize its work- it just faded away in the 1950s

1927 changed at insistence of black women to Inter-Racial problems, and finally Inter-Racial Relations-all references disappear in the 1950s

NYT "Race Bias Taken Up by Women Voters" May 2, 1946

Mrs. Maxwell Barus, president of the New Jersey League, presented a resolution under which only those hotels which accepted all delegates without discrimination as to race would hereafter have the patronage of the league biennial conventions. The motion was carried by voice vote. At this convention there are two Negro delegates, Mrs. E.C. Grady of St. Louis and Mrs. Joseph Snowden, representing a unit of the Cook County, Ill. League. They are staying with friends here, league officials said, not being able to get accommodations at the hotels where the other delegates are staying.

1956

Hampton, Virginia league letter national leadership about hotel treatment of members
Response sent to Mrs. George Babcock, Alexandria, Virginia

LEAGUE TRIVIA FACTS

- WHICH FIRST LADY, AND FORMER LWV LEGISLATIVE POLICY V.P., WROTE AN EDITORIAL ABOUT LEAGUE HYPOCRISY ON ISSUES OF RACE?
- IN WHAT YEAR DID LEAGUE BYLAWS ALLOW FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF "COLORED" LEAGUES?
- WHICH SIX CITIES WERE REPORTED TO HAVE FULLY FUNCTIONING "COLORED" LEAGUES ?
- WHICH TWO OHIO CITIES REQUESTED PERMISSION TO HAVE "COLORED" LEAGUES?
- WHICH STATE HAD "INDIAN" LEAGUES?
- WHICH SOUTHERN STATE DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN MEETINGS OF SOUTHERN LEAGUE PRESIDENTS BECAUSE THEY HAD "NO PROBLEM" WITH RACE AND MEMBERSHIP?

Request for colored Leagues in Toledo and Cincinnati in 1928

Eleanor Roosevelt calling League on its hypocrisy 1956

When did League Bylaws allow for the establishment of "colored" segregated leagues?

Never

Separate "colored" Leagues

Oakland

San Francisco

Los Angeles

Chicago

St. Louis

Tacoma, Washington

Indian Leagues

Wisconsin (2)

After the 1953 How to Get and Keep Members publications, what were some of the Which southern state did not feel a need to participate in meetings for southern Presidents?

Kentucky- said they were not experiencing any problems

LEAGUE TRIVIA FACTS

- IN THE 1953 PUBLICATION *HOW TO GET AND KEEP MEMBERS* WHAT EXCUSES WERE GIVEN FOR WHY WOMEN OF COLOR WERE NOT OR COULD NOT BE MEMBERS OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS?
- WHICH STATE/ LOCAL LEAGUE REJECTED THE MOTHER OF A MAJOR CITY MAYOR FOR MEMBERSHIP?
- WHEN WAS THE FIRST SELF-STUDY IN WHICH THE LEAGUE WAS DESCRIBED AS BEING AN ORGANIZATION OF "EDUCATED, MIDDLE TO UPPER CLASS- MIDDLE-AGED WHITE WOMEN?"
- WHEN WAS THE LAST SELF STUDY THAT CAME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION?

excuses sent to national leadership for why Negroes should not be League members?

They are uneducated

Domestic and unskilled workers

They had to be taught

The League attracted as members women who were well-educated, middle-class and progressive in their thoughts

New Orleans, Louisiana- Sybil Morial wrote about this experience in her book "A Witness to Change"

How many self-studies had the League conducted that mention the lack of diversity as a problem for the organization and recommended more outreach?

First 1929

Last 2018

LEAGUE TRIVIA FACTS

- WHO WAS THE FIRST BLACK NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER?
- WHEN DID THE BLACK CAUCUS START TO CONVENE ON A FORMAL BASIS AT CONVENTIONS?
- WHICH STATE IS HOME TO THE LOCAL LEAGUE THAT HAS DESIGNED AN INITIATIVE ENTITLED "FORGOTTEN FOREMOTHERS"?

Josie Johnson ,Minnesota appointed 1968 elect 1970-1972
Convention 1970 at the 50th anniversary convention – Led by Fay Williams, Indiana and
Josie Johnson Board members
LWV of Muncie-Delaware, Indiana
16 African-American Board members, including the current two
Between 1920- 1968; 2010-2016 there were none



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Hopefully you have heard enough to motivate you to look into your own League's history
 We will take the next _____ minutes to allow you some time to talk and
 plan a course of action

- The past as prelude to the future?
- Who were women of color in your area?
- How did they contribute?
- Were they given credit?
- How were their contributions overshadowed?
- Excuses for not being more inclusive
 - Because of the times
 - Power structure
 - Social conventions
- Ways in which people create narratives

GETTING STARTED

- DO YOUR STATE ARCHIVES CONTAIN INFORMATION USEFUL IN IDENTIFYING THE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT "RACE" IN YOUR LOCAL LEAGUES?
- DO YOUR LOCAL LEAGUERS HAVE BOXES IN THE ATTIC, BASEMENT OR GARAGE THAT CONTAIN HISTORIC INFORMATION?
- ARE THERE MEMBERS AVAILABLE FOR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES?
- CAN YOU IDENTIFY THROUGH MEMBERSHIP ROSTERS MEMBERS OF COLOR THROUGHOUT YOUR LEAGUE'S HISTORY?
- WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU NEED TO ASK TO GET THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY FOR YOUR LEAGUE?

LWV IS AN ORGANIZATION FULLY COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN PRINCIPLE AND IN PRACTICE. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION ARE CENTRAL TO THE ORGANIZATION'S CURRENT AND FUTURE SUCCESS IN ENGAGING ALL INDIVIDUALS, HOUSEHOLDS, COMMUNITIES, AND POLICY MAKERS IN CREATING A MORE PERFECT DEMOCRACY.

THERE SHALL BE NO BARRIERS TO FULL PARTICIPATION IN THIS ORGANIZATION ON THE BASIS OF GENDER, GENDER IDENTITY, ETHNICITY, RACE, NATIVE OR INDIGENOUS ORIGIN, AGE, GENERATION, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, CULTURE, RELIGION, BELIEF SYSTEM, MARITAL STATUS, PARENTAL STATUS, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, LANGUAGE, ACCENT, ABILITY STATUS, MENTAL HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OR BACKGROUND, GEOGRAPHY, NATIONALITY, WORK STYLE, WORK EXPERIENCE, JOB ROLE FUNCTION, THINKING STYLE, PERSONALITY TYPE, PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OR AFFILIATION AND/OR ANY OTHER CHARACTERISTIC THAT CAN BE IDENTIFIED AS RECOGNIZING OR ILLUSTRATING DIVERSITY.



CALL TO ACTION

- # WE WERE THERE TOO!
- # RHETORIC OR REALITY
- # STRATEGIC CHOICES
- # A SENSE OF HOPE
- # DOING THE RIGHT THING
- # A FRAGILE BALANCE
- # A NEW DAY
- # BELIEVE
- # THE PROMISE OF A NEW ORDER
- # I TOO, AM THE LEAGUE
- # WE HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE
- # FINDING PURPOSE
- # HOPE, PROMISE, POSSIBILITIES

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Next year we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the League of Women Voters. We do so with pride in our past and purpose for our future. This is a League that has fought for so much and has achieved so much, but we will not and can not rest on our laurels. We are a League of activists not archivists. These reflect my opening remarks from 1999 when were celebrating 80 years. As we move toward 100 years we need to make sure that our history is not a romanticized. We need to see a true version of ourselves, not selfies taken to give our best angle. We cannot overlook one of our most glaring deficiencies, our ability to deal with diversity, equity and inclusion.

It is my privilege to pick up where other researchers left off.

My story- DEI speaks to being invited- well I invited myself and stuck around for almost 40 years- through good times and bad- so did many other women of colors whose stories we should know.

And at the 100th anniversary celebration of the founding of the League of Women Voters I will be the only person of color to have ever served as national President. So what?

I want to make sure that my contributions are not relegated to the footnotes!



LET'S TALK!