

*THE COUNTY ELECTION: A  
HISTORY OF VOTING IN AMERICA*

*IMAGES FOR LESSON #1*

## From John Adams, 1776:

The same reasoning which will induce you to admit all men who have no property, to vote, with those who have,...will prove that you ought to admit women and children; for, generally speaking, women and children have as good judgments, and as independent minds, as those men who are wholly destitute of property, these last being to all intents and purposes as much dependent upon others, who will please to feed, clothe, and employ them, as women are upon their husbands, or children on their parents ...Depend upon it, Sir, it is dangerous to open so fruitful a source of controversy and altercation as would be opened by attempting to alter the qualifications of voters; there will be no end to it. New claims will arise; women will demand the vote; lads from twelve to twenty-one will think their rights not enough attended to; and every man who has not a farthing, will demand an equal voice with any other, in all acts of state. It tends to confound and destroy all distinctions, and prostrate all ranks to one common level.

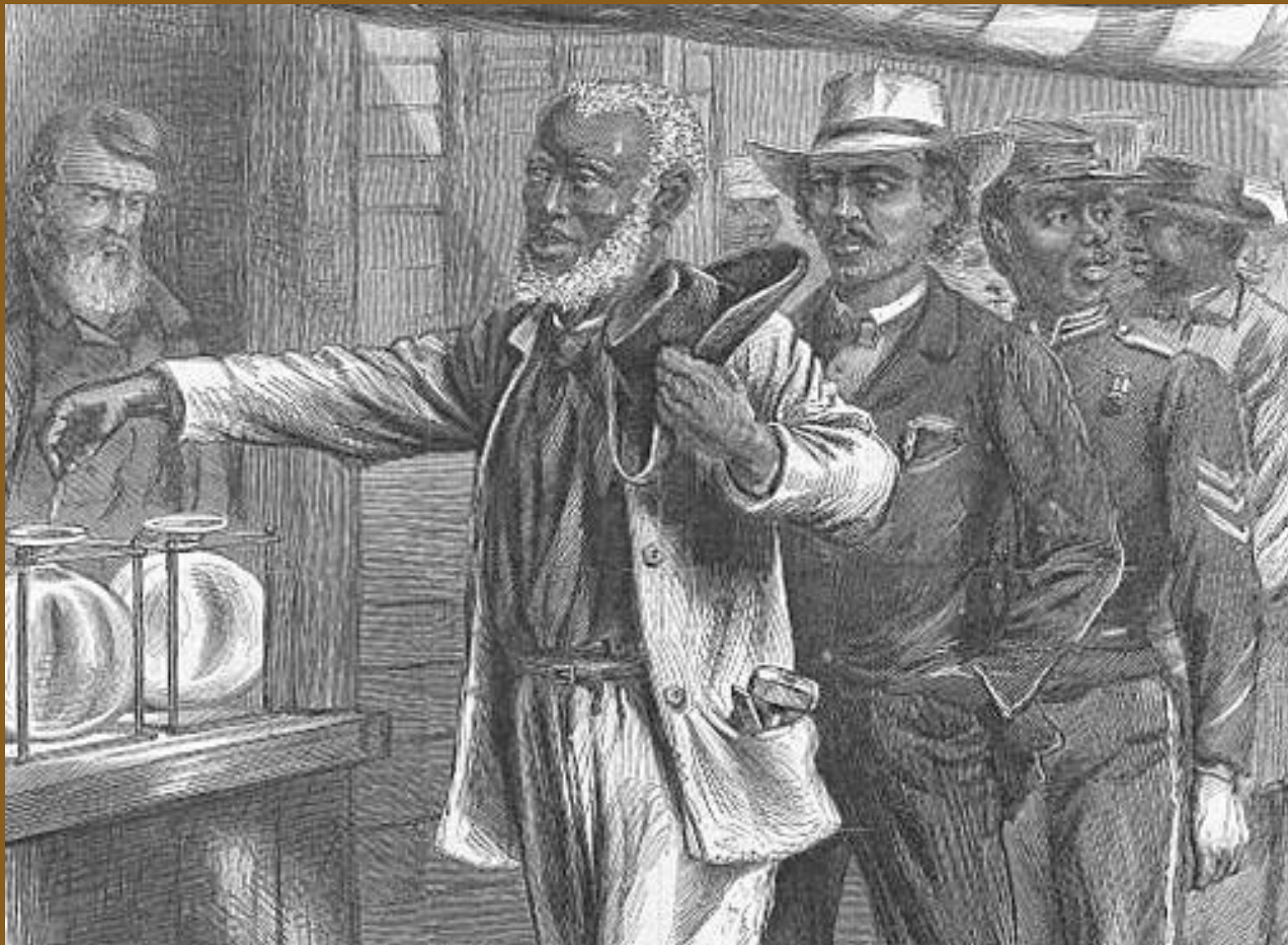
# Excerpts from Declaration of Rights and Sentiments

Presented at the Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, NY,  
1848

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; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness....

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman.....

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective Franchise....



“The First Vote”

Alfred R. Waud, *Harper's Weekly*, 11/16/1867

This image takes place in Virginia. The first 3 men in line represent examples of Black political leaders- a skilled craftsman, a man from the city, and a Union Army veteran.

# 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution

Ratified February 3, 1870

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.



Women Voting in Boston,  
Harper's Weekly, Dec. 15,  
1888

**Excerpt from a speech by Algernon S. Crapsey given in 1901 to the members of the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C.**

You have the right to vote. Vote, and if you die in the very act of voting you offer your life upon the altar of your country. It would be a small matter if one hundred thousand lives were laid down to establish the great principle of the absolute equality of all men before the law. If armed men invade your homes die defending your homes. Your death will not be useless; it will rouse a spirit of wrath in the whole country that will come to your rescue and will avenge your wrongs.

# 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution

Ratified August 18, 1920

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.



## Excerpt from a letter written during “Freedom Summer”, 1964

Dear Friends,

...Until court orders finally demand it, the registering of Negroes on the official books of the state seems a hopeless task: 94% of the eligible Negroes in Mississippi aren't registered. Old Martha Lamb, the official registrar of Leflore County, just won't give in to the waves of black faces which confront her every day. Earlier this month, three Congressmen came by to observe voter registration practice in Miss. A young Negro girl, age 24, had tried to register nine times in the past three years. Each time she failed. When we asked her to try again, she broke down in tears saying she just couldn't take any more degradation. However, Bill Ryan, one of the Congressmen, demanded to see her back [written] tests. (We were never allowed to see them ourselves.) He felt strongly that her answers were better than some of the whites who had passed. So Ryan convinced her to try again. (We learned later that she *did* pass, with Congressman Ryan breathing down Martha Lamb's neck. She was the only Negro to be registered in Leflore County all summer.)...

Best regards,  
Phil