

MODULE F: AN ASIAN AMERICAN WOMAN TAKING A STAND IN NEW YORK

Overview

While the national women's suffrage movement is associated with such names as Alice Paul, Susan B. Anthony, and Carrie Chapman Catt, the voices and efforts of women of color are often overlooked. This is true of Dr. Mabel Ping Hua Lee (1896–1966), who became a force in the New York campaign. While only a high school student, the future Dr. Lee led the now famous women's suffrage march in 1912 astride a white horse and wearing the latest suffrage fashion, as reported in the various newspapers of the time. More important were her unwavering, passionate, and logical speeches in support of women's suffrage.

In this lesson, students will examine the actions of Dr. Mabel Ping Hua Lee in taking a stand for voting rights in New York. The students will analyze an article written by Lee to address the following questions:

- What actions were taken by this individual to secure the right to vote in New York?
- How could these actions in New York impact voting rights across the United States?

Materials

- Mabel Lee, "The Meaning of Woman Suffrage," *Chinese Students' Monthly* 9, no. 7 (May 1914): 526–531. Available on the Internet Archive, archive.org/details/chinesestudentsm14bost.

Procedure

1. **Lesson Preparation (5 minutes):** Remind students of the essential and supporting questions.
2. **Lesson Activity (One Class Period):**
 - a. You may choose to complete this document analysis as a whole-class, small-group, or individual activity. Explain the procedure to the students if you have not already completed a module using this K/S/R activity. The full instructions can be found in the Lesson 2 Overview on page 7. The article is 333 words long, so the students should select 8–10 keywords.
3. **Discussion (5–10 minutes)**
 - a. After students have completed the activity, ask them to identify the main arguments made by Dr. Lee.
 - b. Engage the class in a brief discussion of the actions taken by Lee to secure the right to vote in New York. Be sure to emphasize and identify the stand she took and the challenges she faced in her efforts to secure the right to vote.
 - c. As a culminating topic for discussion, have students revisit the essential questions and make predictions about how the actions taken by Lee in New York could have impacted voting rights across the United States, citing key evidence from the documents to support their claims.

Mabel Lee, “The Meaning of Woman Suffrage” (1914)

DIRECTIONS

1. *Underline, circle, or highlight 8-10 keywords from Mabel Lee’s “The Meaning of Woman Suffrage.” Do not select “connector” words (are, is, the, and, so, etc.).*
2. *Use the keywords you select to write a sentence that summarizes the meaning of the speech.*
3. *Restate the summary sentence—but this time in your own words.*

The Meaning of Woman Suffrage

. . . The idea that women should ever wish to have or be anything more than their primitive mothers appears at first thought to be indeed tragic enough to be comic; but if we sit down and really think it over, throwing aside all sentimentalism, we find that it is nothing more than a wider application of our ideas of justice and equality. We all believe in the idea of democracy; woman suffrage or the feminist movement . . . is the application of democracy to women. . . .

The fundamental principle of democracy is equality of opportunity, as distinguished from equality of compensation. . . . I conceive it as fourfold, i.e., having four stages in its development. . . .

The first or spiritual stage is represented by the early Christian movement. Christ himself makes the democratic statement that slaves had as much as princes in the sight of God. . . .

The second or legal stage is the fight for equality before the law, and is worked out principally in England . . . with the fight for the Magna Charta and, we might say, is still going on. . . .

The third or political stage is that for the equal right to choose the rulers for making laws, and is summed up in the statement of Thomas Jefferson, “Just government depends on the consent of the governed.” It is the fundamental idea of American democracy and is well expressed in the Declaration of Independence. . . .

The fourth or economic stage stands for economic equality or full reward of labor. . . .

The idea of feminism is to give unto woman what man has successively gained in the different stages. It is the application to her of the fourfold ideal of democracy. . . .

The third or political phase of feminism is the question of woman suffrage—the giving of political privileges to woman. Therefore, suffrage is only one fourth of the system of feminism. . . .

The writer wishes merely to present true feminism as it is . . . and to show that it is nothing more than the extension of democracy or social justice and equality of opportunities to women. . . .

Source: Mabel Lee, “The Meaning of Woman Suffrage,” *Chinese Students’ Monthly* 9, no. 7 (May 1914): 526–531.

Mabel Lee, “The Meaning of Woman Suffrage” (1914)

Keywords (8–10)

Keyword Summary Sentence

Restate the Summary Sentence in Your Own Words