

Diversity, Equality & Inclusion

DEI Committee Friday Thoughts

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Let's Honor Women's Equality Day by Using
Our Right to Vote!

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Since 1973, the United States Congress has recognized August 26 as Women's Equality Day. This is a day to acknowledge women of past, present and future generations who advocated for equality.

Women were granted the right to vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The right to vote is at the foundation of our democracy today, as it was with the founding of the country. White men who were landowners were the first to be allowed to vote in federal elections. This was deemed appropriate because they had an economic interest in the outcome of the elections. (State elections were regulated by the individual states.)

The right to vote has evolved throughout the history of America. The requirement to be a property owner fell away in the early 1800s. The 15th Amendment to the Constitution was enacted in 1870, following the Civil War. It stated, "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 [19th Amendment](#), ratified in 1920, finally gave women the right to vote. While much focus has, historically, been made of white suffragists Susan B Anthony, Alice Paul and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the Suffragist movement did include diversity. Nina Otero-Warren navigated between Hispano and Anglo worlds, advocating for women's equality in those communities. Dr. Mabel Ping-Hua Lee a Chinese immigrant who advocated for the right to vote. She was denied because the 19th amendment did not apply to her status as a Chinese immigrant. While it would seem the 15th and 19th amendments

should have allowed all men and women to have an equal vote in our democratic system, this was not the case. There were many ways women (and men) of color were denied the right to vote after 1920.

The [1965 Voting Rights Act](#) passed by Congress and signed by President Johnson as a result of the Civil Rights movement provided **access** to polling places under federal law making it easier for all citizen to vote. This is the foundation of our democracy.

Hopefully, this brief history of the right to vote brings to your attention the hard work of advocacy that generations of men and women have done so that women can vote in our society. **Do not squander this right to vote.**

Since the last election in 2020 you may now have a different polling place for the 2022 election on November 8. If you live in Virginia you can [use this link](#) to confirm your polling location.

One way to acknowledge Women's Equality Day is to make sure your voter registration is up to date. The last day to register to vote in the November 2022 election is October 18, 2022.

People have traveled halfway around the planet and endured hardship for this opportunity in this great country. Let's get off the couch and head to the polls. It's not far and it's not hard to do.

I appreciate being asked to acknowledge Women's Equality Day with the Goodwin Living community. I am mindful that the opportunities I have available to me today are thanks to women before me who did so much hard and sometimes dangerous work ensuring my right to vote.