



*Audio Access For People Who Are
Blind or Print-Challenged*

NEWS RELEASE

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Photo/Courtesy Connecticut Historical Society, Gift of David Madsen

CRIS Radio, State Archivists Team Up To Produce Voices of Woman Suffrage

100-year-old suffrage documents highlight voter rights and racial equity

Windsor, Conn. –CRIS Radio and archivists from the Connecticut State Library, the Connecticut Historical Society, and Watkinson Library & College Archives at Trinity College are working together to bring to life 100-year-old documents – featuring human-narrated recordings available as podcasts -- about the divisive debate over the passage of the 19th Amendment that was passed in August 1920.

The collaboration features more than 20 historic documents, including a handwritten letter expressing much urgency by Mary Townsend Seymour, the first president of the Hartford chapter’s NAACP, to Mary Ovington, the co-founder of the NAACP. Seymour worried that prominent suffragettes – in their campaign to receive the right to vote - were not emphasizing the voting rights for all women – particularly women of color in the South.

“This incredible project commemorates the centennial passage of the 19th Amendment,” said Secretary of the State Denise Merrill. “This pivotal and historic ratification gave women the right to vote, with the intent of uplifting women of all intersectional backgrounds to have a voice. Although we celebrate the crucial milestones of the past, we still have a lot of work to do moving forward in fighting for the rights of women of color, who have been so historically marginalized. We need to push for more in allowing their voices be heard.”

Funded by a grant from the Pomeroy Foundation, the documents and audio versions include those in favor and opposed to giving women the right to vote, providing a window into the intense debate that consumed the nation 100 years ago, with those opposed maintaining that it would negatively impact the dynamics between husband and wife at home.

In addition to newspaper articles, meeting minutes from the Conn. Woman Suffrage Association, promotional leaflets, and government correspondence, the project also includes handwritten letters and essays written by prominent suffragettes from Connecticut, such as Katherine H. Hepburn (actress Katherine Hepburn’s mother) and

Ella Rush Murray.

“The ‘Voices of Woman Suffrage’ collection at CRIS is an audio treasure trove,” said State Historian Walt Woodward. “These letters, essays, articles, and reports bring to life the struggles surrounding the ratification of the 19th Amendment in ways that only the spoken word can do. How wonderful that this foundational moment in the long struggle to realize the full promise of America is available for public access.”

The original documents and audio versions are available at www.crisradio.org.

The mission of CRIS Radio is to provide access to printed information to individuals who are blind or unable to read due to other print disabilities, such as dyslexia, cerebral palsy, or Parkinson’s disease.

Amy Porter, commission of the Department of Aging and Disability Services, applauds the project. “As such an important part of American history, information about the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote should be accessible to all, much like the amendment itself ensured the act of casting a vote was accessible to all,” Porter said. “The Voices of Woman Suffrage project promotes access to original documents, particularly for adults and students who are blind or cannot access print material due to a disability. We applaud CRIS Radio and their partners in the creation of this audio project.”

Although the goal of the project is to provide access to historical documents for individuals with disabilities, it is available to students, researchers, and citizens of all abilities.

About CRIS Radio

CRIS (Connecticut Radio Information System) is a 42-year-old nonprofit based in Windsor and is Connecticut’s only radio-reading service providing audio access to news and information for people who are blind or print-challenged, including those unable to read due to physical, learning, intellectual or emotional disabilities. CRIS Radio, through its family of services – CRIS Radio, CRISKids™, CRISAccess™ (audio tours), CRIS Streaming (hospital streaming to each patient room), and CRIS en Español - expands access to print information for individuals with print disabilities throughout the state. CRIS operates with a small number of staff and volunteers at its broadcast center in Windsor and five satellite studios located in Danbury, Norwalk, Norwich, Trumbull and West Haven. For more information, contact CRIS Radio at info@crisradio.org or call (860) 527-8000.

About the Connecticut State Library

The Connecticut State Library is an Executive Branch agency of the State of Connecticut. The State Library provides a variety of library information, archival, public records, museum, and administrative services to citizens of Connecticut, as well as the employees and officials of all three branches of State government. The Connecticut



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State Archives and the Museum of Connecticut History are components of the State Library. For more on the State Library, visit www.ctstatelibrary.org.

About Connecticut Historical Society

CHS is a private, nonprofit, educational organization established in 1825, and is the state's official historical society and one of the oldest in the nation. Located at One Elizabeth Street in Hartford, the CHS houses a museum, library, and the Edgar F. Waterman Research Center that are open to the public (check website for days/hours) and funded by private contributions. The CHS's collection includes more than four million manuscripts, graphics, books, artifacts, and other historical materials accessible at our campus and on loan at other organizations. For more on the CHS, visit www.chs.org.

About Watkinson Library & College Archives at Trinity Library

The Watkinson Library serves as a public research library, the rare book and special collections of the Trinity College Library, and the repository of the College archives. It contains more than 175,000 printed volumes ranging in date from the 15th century to the present; 4,000 linear feet of manuscript and archival material; 25,000 pieces of sheet music (1720-1950); over 5,000 sound recordings; and thousands of pieces of ephemera (postcards, greeting cards, trade cards, ballad sheets, prints, maps, playbills, posters, and broadsides). For more information, visit <https://www.trincoll.edu/LITC/Watkinson>.

Photo/Courtesy Conn. Historical Society, Gift of David Madsen



Caption: Women march in a parade down Main Street, Hartford, about 1912.
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