

# VOTES FOR WOMEN!

## THE LEADERSHIP OF ALICE PAUL

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Who are the greatest change agents in our nation's history? Do you immediately think of Frederick Douglass, Rachel Carson perhaps, or Martin Luther King, Jr.? All great answers. But what about Alice Paul?

Who was Alice Paul? More than any other single individual, she was responsible for securing the



Nineteenth Amendment extending voting rights to women. In 1913, at the age of 28, Paul announced the push for a federal suffrage amendment with a parade of 5,000 women from the U.S. Capitol down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Treasury building. Just four blocks into the march the women were attacked by male bystanders, with one hundred women eventually needing medical attention. While the parade didn't go off as planned, the spectacle both before and during the attacks brought national attention to suffrage, accomplishing the objective.

John Kotter says all successful change efforts must **increase the urgency**, and that most change efforts fail because they don't master this critical step. In order to keep up the urgency, Paul inaugurated a number of innovative strategies: she kept files on each Congressman and lobbied for their vote (something that is routine today, but not in the 1910s); she started a newspaper, *The Suffragist*; she organized unions in each state to push for voting rights for women; and she started a political party, the National Women's Party, not to run

candidates but to advance the position of women.

Finally, in 1917, Alice Paul organized pickets of the White House, using Woodrow Wilson's own words to point out the hypocrisy of his advocating for liberty and freedom in Europe while refusing to support voting rights for women at home. In the summer of 1917 authorities began arresting the picketers. Alice Paul was arrested in October 1917, and when she went on a hunger strike she was brutally force fed. The public backlash to the treatment of the jailed suffragists forced Wilson, for political reasons, to pardon the women and publicly support a suffrage amendment. Alice Paul was just 34 years old when the amendment passed.

This seminar uses Alice Paul's story, brought to life by contemporary photos as well as video clips from the Hollywood movie *Iron Jawed Angels*, to highlight cutting edge theories on leading change and help participants think about the change efforts they want to lead and how they might go about doing so. Specifically we explore a new model from on the **types of leaders who create radical change**, how to **create a sense of urgency**, and the utility of **leadership agility**.

For groups in Washington D.C. it is possible to tour the Sewall-Belmont House, home of the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, and see the banners the suffragists carried in 1917 – among many other artifacts – making the experience unforgettable.

