

SUFFRAGIST / SUFFRAGETTE : DEFINITIONS

From David Roberts, *Suffragette: the Battle for Equality*, 2018

Suffragist is the name given to someone who campaigns for the right to vote, either for themselves or for others.

"Suffragist" comes from the word "suffrage", which means the right to vote in political elections. Using your vote is important because it is a way of expressing your choice or point of view when a decision is being made. A democracy is a system of government in which everyone should have an equal right to express their point of view.

Later, as the actions of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) grew more daring, a journalist changed the word "suffragist" to "suffragette" to distinguish the militant members of the WSPU from the more peaceful members of the other suffragette societies. There was a fashion to add "-ette" to the end of words to describe things as small, inferior or feminine. By replacing "-ist" at the end of "suffragist" with "-ette", it made the word seem insignificant, small, silly, or fake. It was mocking and making fun of them.

But instead of being upset or angry, WSPU members reclaimed the word, proudly using it to describe themselves and catching the attention of the general public, which is what they wanted.

Suffragette Societies

In the mid-1800s

LSWS London Society for Women's Suffrage (1867)

NUWSS National Union of Women's Suffrage Society (1897)



In 1903

WSPU Women's Social and Political Union (1903) (Emmeline Pankhurst)



