



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
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FEMINIST FOUR



Women Warriors

Women have a long and important history of serving and protecting. Despite gender-based restrictions on their military service, women have been instrumental in guarding U.S. national security interests.

Cathay Williams (1844-1893)



Cathay Williams circa 1876, courtesy of the U.S. Army

Cathay Williams enlisted in the army under the pseudonym William Cathay. She was the first Black woman to enlist in the American Armed Forces, and was also the only female [Buffalo Soldier](#). Williams managed to serve for two years before being discovered after she contracted smallpox while stationed in New Mexico during the Indian Wars. The physician treating her notified her superiors that she was a woman, and Williams was discharged honorably in 1868. She died in 1893, shortly after being [denied](#) the disability pension due to her for her

military service.

Mary Hallaren (1907-2005)

Following the 1942 attack on Pearl Harbor, Mary Hallaren left her teaching job to enlist in the army. She was a member of the first class of recruits in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, later named the [Women's Army Corp](#). In 1948, Hallaren commanded the largest female overseas unit to date.



Mary Hallaren, June, 1946. Courtesy of the Harry S Truman Library

She later became the WAC's director, advocating for the regular and permanent integration of women into the armed forces. After retiring

from the Army in 1960, Hallaren was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1966 for her leadership.

Learn more about how women's participation in the WWII war efforts advanced feminism in [Songs of the Suffragists](#).

Ann E. Dunwoody (1953-)



Click to see an interview with Ann Dunwoody

In 1974, Ann Dunwoody carried on her family tradition of military service when she enlisted in the army during her senior year of college. During her army career, she broke barriers and shattered glass ceilings, becoming the first female in several leadership positions. Dunwoody served as a second lieutenant before becoming the first female battalion commander of the 82nd Airborne Division in 1992. She then went on to become [Fort Bragg's](#) first female officer.

In 2008, she became the first female officer to receive the rank of a four-star general. After thirty-three years of service, she retired in 2012, publishing a [book](#) on her experiences.

Military women have come a [long way](#): from clandestine service, to limited auxiliary support roles, to the right to serve in combat. In 2019, a U.S. District Court judge ruled that it was unconstitutional to require men to register for the draft, while excluding women. The decision was overruled by the Fifth Circuit on appeal. While the Supreme Court declined to consider the matter in 2021, this case law reflects a forward movement toward gender equality in the U.S.

Female Spies

Beyond the image of female spies as [Mata Hari](#)-type “honeypots,” women have valiantly served our country through undercover and covert operations since the [Revolutionary War](#). From the very founding of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1947, women have been engaged on espionage on behalf of our country. [Virginia Hall](#) famously collected intelligence for the allies during WWII, and women played a crucial role in bringing down Bin Laden back in 2011.

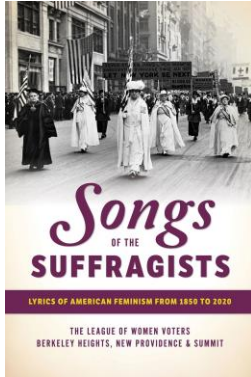


Learn more about the history of women in the CIA by clicking the photo.

[Zero Dark Thirty's](#) dramatization of the hunt for Bin Laden was only loosely based on reality, but its portrayal of women playing a major role in the significant post-9/11 initiative was accurate. The CIA's Bin Laden team established in 1995 was predominantly comprised of highly specialized female agents.

While Gina Haspel's appointment as the first permanent female CIA director in 2018 was controversial, given her leadership during a period when the CIA was engaged in torture, she received widespread support from her fellow CIA agents, proving how far women have come to overcome the prejudice against them serving in leadership roles.

About the Feminist Four



The Feminist Four is a monthly newsletter that describes four ways feminists leveraged their cultural and political influence to fight for women's equality in the US. It is part of the LWV-BHNPS' ongoing Songs of the Suffragists Project, which includes a [book](#), [documentary film](#), and [discussion guide](#). Click on the photos in this email if you would like to learn more about the described topics. Support our project by buying our [book](#). And please reply by email if you would like help presenting a virtual *Songs of the Suffragists* program in your community!

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