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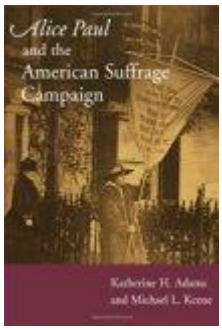

Katherine H. Adams, Michael L. Keene. *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008. xix + 274 pp. $60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-252-03220-2.

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The Rhetoric of Suffrage

Most Americans know Alice Paul, the Quaker feminist born in 1885, as one of the key activists in the cause of women's suffrage. What most do not know about her is the focus of Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene's new book, which presents Paul as essentially the first American media strategist--as cunning as a Karl Rove, as astute as a Martin Luther King Jr.--in her quest for a national amendment to the Constitution to expand the franchise to women. The authors particularly wish to recognize Paul--who earned a master's and doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania, studied at the London School of Economics, and earned a doctor of civil law degree from American University--as a practitioner of nonviolence, a tactic that she learned from reading Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, and Mahatma Gandhi, as well as through her Quaker training.

Using innovative nonviolent tactics--unlike Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst in Britain, whose Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) Paul joined for a time--Paul kept suffrage before the public eye by staging one sensational media event after another over nearly an eight-year period, rallying thousands to her cause, in spite of an obstinate Congress, a reluctant president, and the preoccupations imposed by World War I. Her clever use of media ranged from publishing a weekly newspaper employing text and editorial cartoons on its front page and bombarding major newspapers with near-daily press releases to ensure inclusion of the perspective of the National Woman's Party (NWP, which she founded), to staging an elaborate pageant down Pennsylvania Avenue the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, thus diverting his press coverage. Using increasingly confrontational nonviolent tactics as the foot-dragging in Washington, D.C., continued during the war, she positioned supporters--"silent sentinels"--at entrances to the White House armed with satiric banners mocking Wilson's democracy rhetoric; endured several months in prison that included hunger strikes, forced feedings, physical abuse, and isolation in the prison's "psychiatric ward"; and eventually burned Wilson in effigy in front of the White House, the first to undertake such an

act. Utilizing letters, news clips, and other Library of Congress holdings from the NWP and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), Adams and Keene fill in major gaps in the history of the suffrage movement, the nonviolent movement, and journalism/media history by rewriting Paul more visibly into the struggle for what would become the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

Adams, the William and Audrey Hutchinson Distinguished Professor of English at Loyola University New Orleans, seeks a more prestigious place in the history of the suffrage campaign for Paul, who has been marginalized by the custodians of mainstream women's history in favor of the work of such suffragists as Carrie Chapman Catt, the leader of the more conservative and "proper" NAWSA. Paul, who began her activism as chair of NAWSA's moribund Congressional Committee with Lucy Burns, eventually broke ranks. NAWSA favored a slower, more cautious state-by-state campaign, while Paul was convinced that only a national amendment would fully enfranchise women. As Adams and Keene write: "In 1913 the women's suffrage movement in the United States was dispersed over a large country, with countless groups functioning separately and with many of them discouraged by state defeats.... [Paul] sought a means of convincing these suffragists of the primacy of a federal amendment, of involving them in the successes possible through nonviolent action, and of acquainting them with the particulars of each upcoming event, a forum where she could use written and visual arguments to define her goals while promulgating an affirmative vision of women's abilities and their future" (p. 42).

What Adams and Keene, the John C. Hodes Teaching Chair in the Department of English at the University of Tennessee, reveal through their detailed narrative is Paul's instinctive abilities to manipulate press coverage of her campaign and, thus, of keeping the drive for a national amendment before the public as well as politicians across the nation. Paul's shrewd tactics sometimes cost her supporters, as when she advocated a boycott of all Democrats during the 1916 elections, even those who had supported suffrage in state campaigns, to pressure party leaders to advocate for the federal amendment in the party's platform. But, her larger interests, both political and moral, were always the priority. According to Adams and Keene, "for Paul, the guiding force behind this new vision of American women and this visual campaign was always nonviolence. This philosophical choice ... stressed the building of self-respect through determined action and sacrifice, the exploitation of well-planned symbolic moments, and the dogged attempt to change the minds and thus the actions of the opposition. This moral grounding caused Paul to feel that NAWSA's meetings and compromises could not be her choice nor could she emulate the violence promulgated by the Pankhursts and their WPSU. Instead, she continued to place women within the national scene, relying on boycotts, picketing, aggressive lobbying, submission to jail terms, and other choices that, like Gandhi's campaign techniques in South Africa and India, changed how the adherents themselves and ultimately how the government and public viewed American women" (p. 247).

Arranged in nine chapters with a short introduction and conclusion, the book presents a sometimes redundant chronological telling of Paul's life and work through 1920, beginning with her "Formation as Activist" and ending with her "At Nonviolent War" (with Wilson). Journalism and media historians will likely find chapter 3, devoted to Paul's weekly newspaper, ***The Suffragist***, which she wrote with Burns, of special interest. Envisioned to serve the cause of suffrage only, unlike NAWSA's more broadly focused ***Woman's Journal***, Paul's weekly subscriptions skyrocketed from twelve hundred in 1913, the first year of publication, to ten thousand paid subscribers five years later. Initially, women's advocate and journalist Rheta Childe Dorr, who had written for several national publications including the *New York*

Evening Post, the *Sun*, and the *Tribune*, as well as magazines, served as editor. She resigned when Paul refused to give her full editorial control. For Paul, there was no place for the objectivity that Dorr sought: *The Suffragist* was an organ for promoting the cause. Following her resignation, Dorr accepted a place on Paul's advisory council and led a demonstration of five hundred members of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1914 to present a resolution on the suffrage amendment to the president. *The Suffragist* was unique among women's publications in utilizing cover editorial cartoons, a point that Adams and Keene use to press their case for Paul's original use of visual rhetoric. While the first two covers were donated by Washington artist Will H. Chandlee, most of the covers were drawn by Nina Evans Allender, who made her artistic reputation, after studying at the Corcoran School of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, as the journal's political cartoonist (she drew over 250 cartoons and was a long-time member of the NWP); the book reproduces several of these. By the end of 1918, as the struggle for the vote became increasingly embattled due to Wilson's obstinacy, Paul had gained the support of prominent Socialist Party members, two of whom--Louise Bryant and John Reed--began writing for *The Suffragist* and speaking at NWP meetings.

Adams's previously published work exploring the historical and political changes in college rhetoric and composition curricula --*Progressive Politics and the Training of America's Persuaders* (1999) and *A Group of Their Own: College Writing Courses and American Women Writers, 1880-1940* (2001)--has prepared her to bring a fresh perspective to examining multiple kinds of rhetoric, especially when combined with political empowerment, one of her favored topics. (Keene's publications have focused almost exclusively on college writing textbooks and guides.) Paul's efforts in the early years of the twentieth century thus provide a perfect vehicle for Adams's interests.

The documentation of Paul's ever-shifting use of nonviolent and visual rhetorical strategies wonderfully focalizes for contemporary readers her uncanny knack for gaining steady, unconventional publicity, a skill largely unrecognized by media historians as well as women's historians. Paul studiously utilized traditional venues--print publications and circular letters to potential supporters, as well as picketing, deputations, and lobbying of Congress and the president--then supplemented them with unusual and frequently controversial public protests, from the staged public demonstrations and Hollywood-worthy pageants and parades to the haunting street theater of the silent sentinels' banners turning Wilson's democracy abroad rhetoric back against him, and the symbolic use of so-called suffrage watchfires--urns used to publicly and literally burn Wilson's speeches and then more radically, his cardboard effigy.

The book invites readers to think of Paul as a forerunner in employing many of the nonviolent media-savvy tactics that would later be used by the civil rights, feminist, and antiwar movements in the mid-to-late twentieth century (and even of some of the nonviolent street theater deployed in Seattle, Washington, during the 1990s protests against the World Trade Organization). Paul was present, as a tribute to her suffrage work, at the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and died in 1977, after watching the Equal Rights Amendment, which she wrote and sponsored immediately after the Nineteenth Amendment, fail to gain ratification.

The book does have some weaknesses. While Adams and Keene's meticulous use of archival documents brings Paul's almost daily work during those eight crucial years alive, they unfortunately add clutter with unnecessary, reductive end-of-chapter summarizing, frequently oversimplified theoretical analysis, and a tone at times approaching hagiography. With few exceptions, the book skirts issues that might cast Paul in a negative light. For example, the dilemma over how visibly

Paul should align her NWP with black women is barely addressed; her alliances with working-class women's organizations and unions came only when such inclusion became expedient to her cause. The authors generally gloss over such controversies, of tremendous importance at the time. More explanation is also needed, for example, in discussing Paul's eagerness to deliberately distance herself and her cause from the NAWSA.

Still, even without a presidential campaign that will produce its first female or African American major party nominee, the not-so-well-known story of Paul's nonviolent and visual rhetorical strategies should be read by anyone interested in the intertwined history of civil rights, media relations, nonviolent movements, gender, and politics.