

**Artist Phyllis Garibay-Coon's mural in the Kansas Capitol celebrates the women of the Kansas Woman Suffrage Movement. The painting was dedicated on January 29, 2025.**



The Kansas Suffragist Memorial Committee was founded in collaboration between the League of Women Voters of Kansas and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Kansas. The full **Kansas Oral History interview** of the artist by Linda Utoff is available [here](#).

**Use this Study Guide to explore the Compelling Questions and learn more about the artist and her work.**

## Compelling Questions

1. What do these terms mean: Suffrage? Disenfranchisement? Amendment?
2. Why were the women suffragists protesting? What did they want?
3. What Constitutional Amendment passed due to their work? What did it accomplish?
4. Were all women allowed to vote after this law passed?
5. What law passed in 1965 that allowed most women of color finally to vote?

## A Brief History of Kansas Suffragist History

The struggle for women's suffrage in Kansas has a long and storied history. Beginning with the 1859 Wyandotte Constitutional Convention, Kansas suffragists waged five campaigns to win women's right to vote. After statehood in 1861, women could vote for local school boards. In 1867, Kansas was the first state in the nation to battle for full woman's suffrage. National suffragists campaigned across the state, but white male voters rejected two propositions to remove the words "white" and "male" from the Constitution.

Twenty years later, Kansas became the first state to grant municipal suffrage to women on February 15, 1887, Susan B. Anthony's birthday. Despite a vigorous campaign in 1894, male voters rejected a woman suffrage amendment. Yet Kansas women won universal suffrage in 1912, after Lizzie S. Sheldon wrote this resolution: "The right of citizens of the state of Kansas to vote and hold offices shall not be denied or abridged on account of sex." In 1919, Jane L. Brooks founded the first state chapter of the League of Women Voters in Kansas, before the Nineteenth Amendment of the US Constitution granted voting rights to women in 1920.

Kansas Suffragist Memorial website: [www.kssuffragist.org](http://www.kssuffragist.org)

### *Additional Questions to Explore about the Artist and her Work*

6. What program did Phyllis Garibay Coons credit for fostering her creativity in her youth?
7. What organization created and financially supported the Kansas Suffragist Memorial, and what were they hoping to accomplish?
8. Why was January 29<sup>th</sup> a good day to reveal the mural?
9. After researching the women for the mural, what did Phyllis Garibay Coons discover about them?
10. What was a common concern for these women?
11. The committee wanted the mural to recognize the women suffragettes who worked for decades to get the vote. Name at least three of these women and what they contributed to the cause.
12. What big event started the suffrage movement in Kansas?
13. Why did the artist use a lot of yellow, white and purple in the painting, and what did each color symbolize?

14. What does the banner at the top of the mural say and who wrote it?
15. What is different on the left side of the mural from the right side?
16. What did Clarinda I.H. Nichols have to write under a pseudonym, and why is she pictured holding the hand of a black woman?
17. Who wrote the bill that that passed in Kansas in 1912, that gave Kansas women the right to vote?
18. Why did many suffragettes come to Kansas?
19. Kansas writer, Langston Hughes, has two significant women in his life in the painting. Who are they and how did they influence him?
20. What is the constellation in the top right corner of the mural, and what other similar symbolism is in the painting?
23. Why do you think the artist, Phyllis Garibay Coons, named the painting “Rebel Women”? What message does the artist hope is conveyed in the painting?
24. If students view both **Michael Young and Phyllis Garibay Coons’s** Kansas Oral Histories, you may want them to **compare the artists’ backgrounds and how they prepared for the competition.**

- Neither of them started as trained painters.
- Both artists share that their families and other individuals encouraged their creativity and interest in art.
- Both mention other experiences that helped to develop their creativity:
- Neither was a trained painter: Michael’s degree was in commercial art, and Phyllis had a varied background in fine arts.



*The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment reads, “The rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”*