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Teresa Cristina de Novaes Marques's new book, *Women's Vote in Brazil*, is a wonderfully accessible summary of the entire women's suffrage movement in Brazil, placed helpfully in international context. The book begins with congressional debates from the 19th century, drawing on Dr. Marques's extensive research into the reading habits of legislators to help readers understand the intellectual arguments that framed early debates about the franchise. It then follows the establishment and development of the various women's suffrage organizations, with special attention to women's leaders who may have previously gone unnoticed. The book outlines Getúlio Vargas's extension of the vote to literate women just before the country's descent into authoritarian dictatorship, then goes on to narrate the ongoing struggles to achieve truly universal and effective suffrage. Full-page mini-biographies of each leader add depth to our understanding. A timeline at the end places Brazil's story in line with important advances in women's suffrage from around the globe. I strongly recommend this book to anyone looking to broaden their understanding of Brazilian history, and especially to teachers who seek highly readable material to diversify their reading lists on women's history.

**Dr. Stephanie Mitchell – Valor Distinguished Chair,  
Professor of History, Carthage College**

Teresa Cristina Novaes Marques's sweeping account of the women's suffrage movement in Brazil offers a fascinating analysis of a centuries-long battle for gender equality and democratization. Marques situates the debates concerning female enfranchisement in Brazil within national and transnational struggles over the meanings of liberalism and its implications for social hierarchies. In highlighting the varied strategies of advocates and opponents of female suffrage, this engaging book, enlivened by short biographies of notables in the campaign for women's suffrage, offers a window onto the gendered ideologies that are constitutive of political power. As Marques notes, voting may not constitute democratic consolidation, but it is one of its foundations. This careful study underscores the hard-fought initiatives to achieve equality at the ballot box in Brazil, and those that remain to advance the democratization of society.

**Dr. Seth Garfield – Associate Professor of History  
at the University of Texas, Austin**



**WOMEN'S  
VOTE  
IN BRAZIL**

*A history of the campaign  
for the vote*

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Chamber of  
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# WOMEN'S VOTE IN BRAZIL

*A history of the campaign  
for the vote*

TERESA CRISTINA DE  
NOVAES MARQUES

Translated by Ana Lúcia Henrique Teixeira Gomes,  
Evan Benjamin Douthit and Morgana Aparecida de Matos



edições câmara

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**FOREWORD**

## Deputy Soraya Santos

SECRETARY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, BRAZIL

It is a great pleasure to present this English-language edition of *Women's vote in Brazil* by Teresa Cristina de Novaes Marques. This book is a didactic and light reading that recounts the inspiring struggle for recognizing Brazilian women's rights vote, joining a movement that mobilizes debates and actions in favor of a more egalitarian world since the French Revolution.

Teresa Cristina de Novaes Marques takes the ideals of the French writer Olympe de Gouges, author of *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* (1791), and of Mary Wollstonecraft, who in 1792 wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, as the basis on which the Brazilian intellectual Nísia Floresta uttered her questions about the emancipation of women through education. The book is a brief report

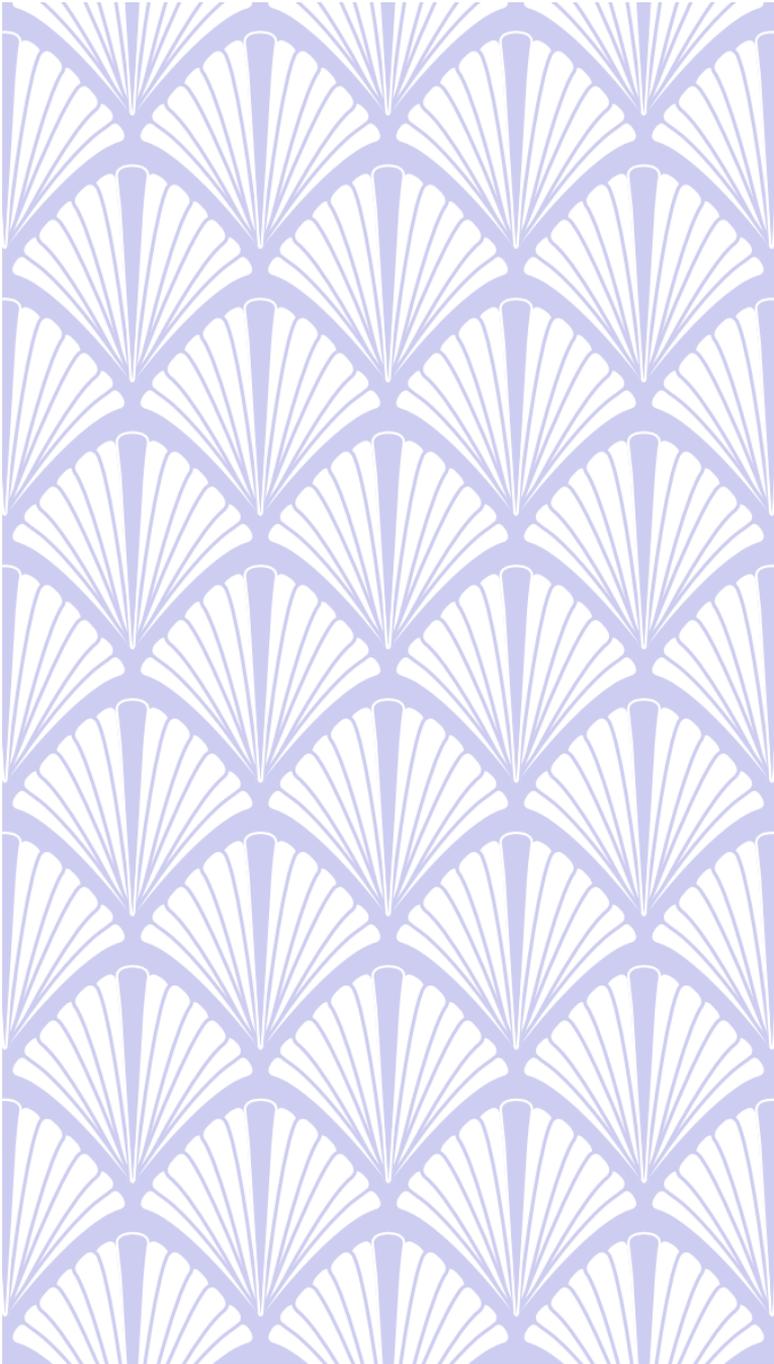
on how the ideas discussed around the world reverberated in the personalities listed here, responsible for the movement that placed the debate on gender equality on the agenda of the Brazilian Legislative.

This version aims to present to the English-speaking public the main episodes in the conquest of the egalitarian vote in Brazil. It also shows the characters who paved the way for a female presence in the Brazilian Parliament through their ideals and achievements. By sharing our stories, we believe in expanding the debate on women's representation in the public sphere and strengthening democracy as a whole in Brazil and in the world.



# 1

A WORD  
THAT  
**CHANGED**  
THE  
**WORLD**



*Equality* is one of the words incorporated into the political vocabulary of the West in the 18th century. Since then, it has been a fundamental part of democracies.

Initially, the word meant that all men were equal before the law, and soon, it was employed to indicate political equality. It has been considered not enough in recent times, and it was necessary to point to social equality to ensure opportunities for all.

In the early days, in the middle of the 18th century, when the word was heard in political meetings and had reached the streets, not all men were considered equal to each other to exercise public functions. The same happened with women who were considered unqualified to participate in decision policies and received unequal legal treatment.

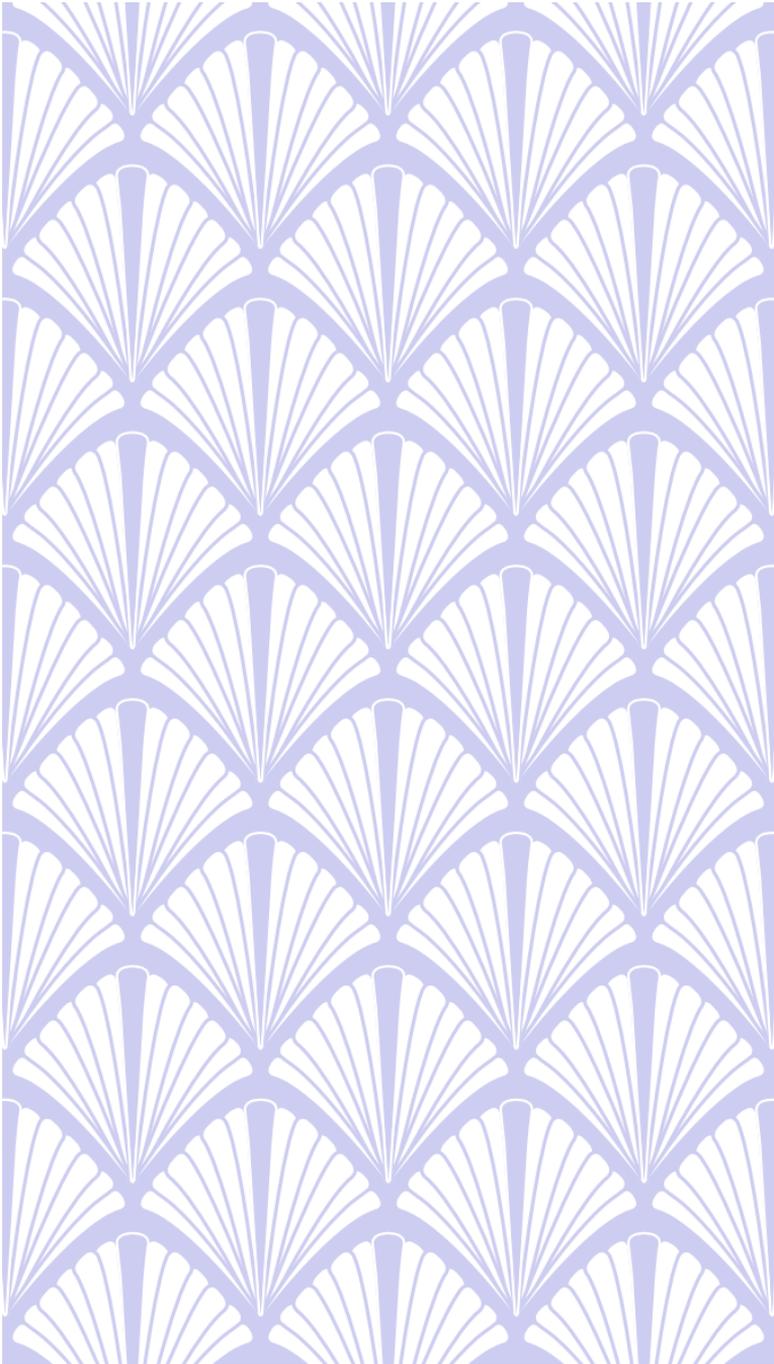
The acceptance of women as citizens varied greatly from country to country, and it was a matter of controversy and heated debates. In some places, women could vote by the end of the 19th century. In Brazil, women won the right to vote in 1932.

This book shows the moments when the Brazilian legislative branch discussed the women's admission into the country's political life. It is aimed at young readers who begin to take an interest in politics. It can help provide political history pedagogical content to support professors, especially regarding ideas and practices related to the exercise of the vote in Brazil.



2

THE FRENCH  
REVOLUTION



The participation of women in politics was discussed for the first time during the French Revolution. Although previously women had headed monarchies as queens and were listened to and respected in their political decisions, this was not because these women were considered individuals with political rights, but because their families had been nobles who held power.

What made the 1790s movements in France so different from the previous ones was the idea, unprecedented in the western world and supported by many, that governments should respect the citizen's will instead of following the monarch's will. This ideal was based on the citizens' image as adult individuals with the right to take part in the cities' life.

In those days, people sought to form their opinions by taking part in political meetings, reading pamphlets or books, or attending plays. Even on the streets, people were discussing what would be the best way of government and who should represent the community before government officials. People attempted to interpret the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, launched in August 1789. The document declared that all men were born free and had equal rights and jointly established a set of rights in which no government, for any reason, could deprive a citizen of liberty, property, security, and of the right to resist oppression.

In the announcement of the declaration, some asked whether all men could really enjoy these rights. In the same way, some women, aware of political events, began to ask whether the document also applied to the female sex.

There was a woman in revolutionary Paris who stood out in the history of the struggle for women's suffrage. She was **Olympe de Gouges**, who left her province to live in Paris.

In September 1791, she published the book *Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizens* in which she criticized the previous declaration and

espoused ideas that are now considered fair, but were then met with disbelief. The author said, for example, that men and women should enjoy the same opportunities in work since both paid taxes equally. She also wrote that unless women were heard when laws were being written, such laws would not be valid. Olympe also held that all women should receive a quality education so that they could be good citizens. The author expressed sympathy for the suffering of slaves brought from Africa to the French colonies and called for the immediate abolition of slavery.

Among the many proposals being discussed then in Revolutionary Paris, Olympe's proposals were not taken seriously by most men involved in political struggles. In the hope that Queen Marie Antoinette might help the cause of women, Olympe sent her a copy of her *Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizens*. Because of this, she was sentenced to death on the accusation of betraying revolutionary ideals.

Olympe de Gouges was not the only woman dissatisfied with the way women were being deprived of rights called universal that must be applied to everyone. Another writer of that time, **Mary Wollstonecraft**, published a small book responding

# OLYMPE DE GOUGES

—  
1755 – 1793

Baptized Marie Gouze, **Olympe de Gouges**, was born in 1755 in Southern France. Widowed, she moved to Paris, where she started attending literary circles and writing plays and novels under Olympe de Gouges' pseudonym. As a participant in an abolitionist club, she wrote *The Slavery of Blacks*. This play sparked a strong reaction from the authorities for being written by a woman who addressed a controversial topic. Involved in the revolutionary era's political unrest, she published the book *Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizens* in 1791. She died in a guillotine in 1793.

***“Woman is born free and remains equal in rights to men. Social distinctions cannot be based on anything except the common good.”***



***“The objective of all political association is to preserve the natural and inalienable rights of women and men. These rights are the right to freedom, property, security, and above all, to resist oppression.”***

*(GOUGES, 1791, our translation)*

# MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

1759 – 1797

**Mary Wollstonecraft** was born in 1759 in London, the same place where she died in August 1797. She worked as a child educator and governance instructor until being admitted as a publisher collaborator. She wrote several published works, and her best-known work, *A vindication of the rights of woman*, was published in 1792. In the same year, Mary moved to Paris to follow political events of the time. Later she returned to England, where she ended up joining a vanguard political and literary group.



*“Females, in fact, denied all political privileges, and not allowed, as married women, excepting in criminal cases, a civil existence, have their attention naturally drawn from the interest of the whole community to that of the minute parts, though the private duty of any member of society must be very imperfectly performed when not connected with the general good. The mighty business of female life is to please, and restrained from entering into more important concerns by political and civil oppression, sentiments become events, and reflection deepens what it should, and would have effaced if the understanding had been allowed to take a wider range.”*

(WOLLSTONECRAFT, 2006, p. 115)

to the criticisms made by the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau against women in his book, *Émile ou de L'Éducation* of 1762. The Genevan philosopher held that women, being intellectually inferior to men, should receive superficial instruction, emphasizing moral education rather than thinking. Rousseau's works, including this treatise on education, were much read in Europe and the Americas. His ideas were respected, and he was considered an intellectual authority in his time, which made things difficult for his critics.

In her major work, Wollstonecraft affirmed that the education a woman received (when they got one!) was the main cause of women's inability to understand political questions. Wollstonecraft thought this could be easily overcome if girls received the same education as boys.

Instead of attributing to women's innate intellectual inferiority, as Rousseau, Kant, and other thinkers of the Enlightenment did, Mary Wollstonecraft criticized the social practices which kept women imprisoned in ignorance, with visible consequences in various aspects of their lives.

Owing to the absence of a serious educational policy, few women received enough education to undertake paid work that did not involve serving,

cleaning, or caring for someone. In marriage, they were subjected to husbands who treated them like children, because men considered themselves superior to women in intellect. Such a situation also made the integration of women in political life unviable as they reached adulthood unprepared to form their own opinion on political questions.

Compared to the ideas of Rousseau, Wollstonecraft's thinking had little impact in Brazil. One of the reasons for this was that her works were not rapidly translated into French - the foreign language read by most educated Brazilians in the 19th century.

## MEANWHILE, IN BRAZIL...

Noticing the lack of a Portuguese version of Mary Wollstonecraft's book, a teacher named Dionísia Gonçalves Pinto, whose pen name became **Nísia Floresta**, did a free translation of the book, meaning that it was not very faithful, which was published in Recife, in the Brazilian Northeast in 1832. That is what Constância Duarte, an expert on Floresta's work, argues. As copies of the work are not available in the collections of the country's major libraries, it is not well established what

book had inspired Nísia Floresta. Other experts claim that Floresta based her work on another foreign writer who held similar ideas to those of Wollstonecraft, particularly in what she said about all women's right to be educated.

That and other works that Nísia Floresta had written during her long life, as texts published in newspapers, can testify that she was convinced that education was an instrument for women's emancipation, using foreign writings on the issue as a way of expressing her opinion on the lives of non-enslaved women in Brazil in her time.

While Nísia Floresta was striving to be recognized as a writer and educator, political struggles wracked the Brazilian Congress, where there was a riot of political ideas. The task of creating institutions for the independent state, which had replaced the former Portuguese government in 1822, occupied the attention of movers and shakers. Although some defended the idea of adopting a republican form of government, most preferred to maintain the monarchy, despite a growing number of people who were dissatisfied with Emperor Dom Pedro I's government. In the end, in April of 1831, Dom Pedro I abdicated the throne of Brazil, returned to Portugal, and left his five-year-old son in his place.

# NÍSIA FLORESTA

1810 – 1885

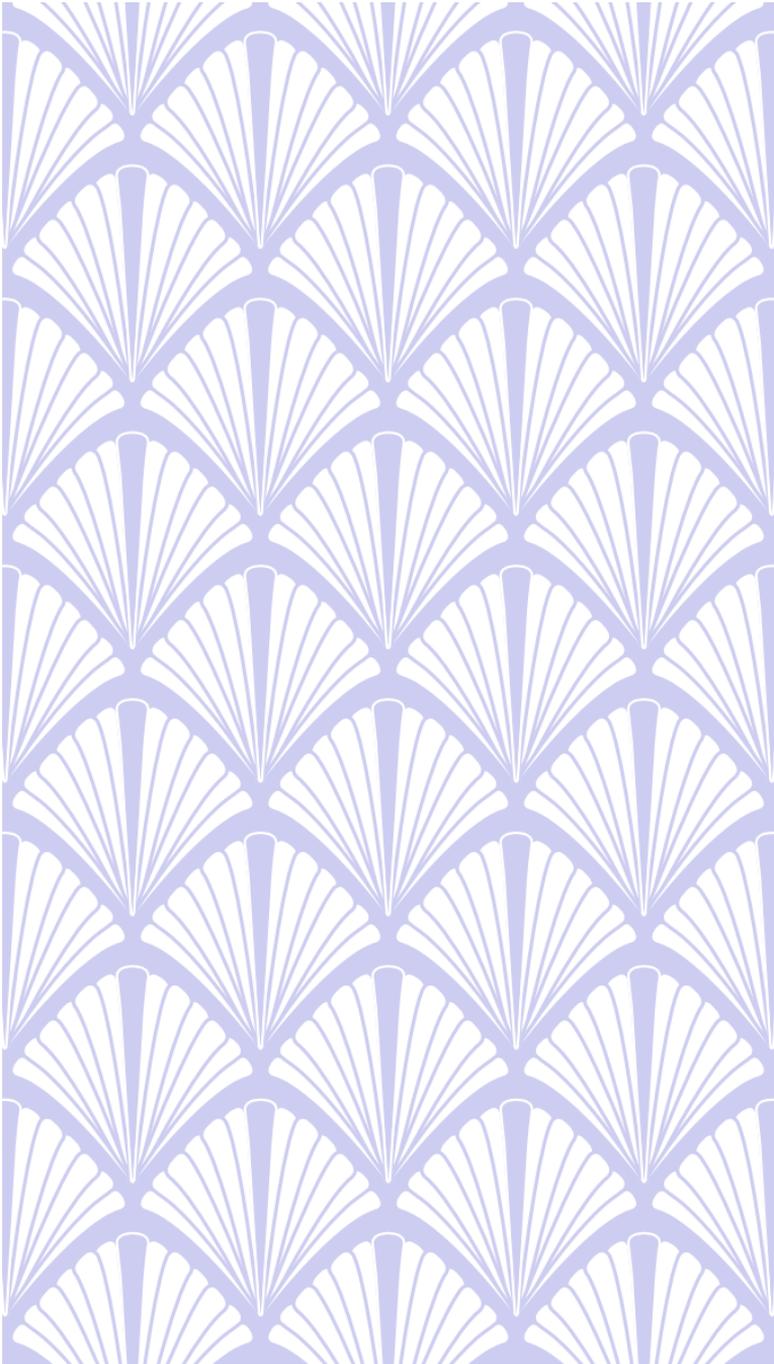


**Dionísia Gonçalves Pinto** was born in 1810 in Papari (Rio Grande do Norte; Northeast of Brazil). She published a work in 1832 under the pseudonym of Nísia Floresta Brasileira Augusta in defense of women's education, a work considered by some experts of being a free translation of the Mary Wollstonecraft's work. In 1833, she moved with her companion and her two sons to Porto Alegre (State of Rio Grande do Sul), where she began to work teaching children. After her spouse's death, Nísia depended entirely on her work as a teacher to maintain her family. Later, she lived in Rio de Janeiro, in Paris, and other European cities. She died in France in 1885. The town of Papari had its name changed in her honor to Nísia Floresta.



3

CITIZEN: A  
**MASCULINE**  
**TERM IN**  
PORTUGUESE



The Constitution of March 24th, 1824, which was granted by Dom Pedro I, introduced the concept of “active citizens”, who could elect the local government and vote for other voters to elect parliament members.

In the elections to choose local (or parochial) governments, all active citizens, that is, free people over the age of 25, who had a minimum annual income of 100,000 reis (or properties with the same value), could vote. However, in elections for deputies, senators, and the provincial assemblies, only active citizens with a minimum annual income of 200,000 reis (or the equivalent in the property) could take part. Such a voting process, which used income to define who could or could not vote, was known as “census suffrage” (voting rights based on assets). One can see these and other aspects of the Constitution of 1824 by reading

its articles from 90 to 94.<sup>1</sup> For all these criteria limiting the exercise of the vote, some citizen concept aspects remained ambiguous. Could it be that this word referred only to men or also to women? The doubts arose because, in writing laws with nouns in the masculine singular form, legislators did not clarify if the terms represented women. In Portuguese, the masculine singular form of nouns is normally used for mixed groups of men and women. Both “voter” and “citizen” are male words in Portuguese, although they also correspond to females. When writing laws using masculine nouns only, was it implied that a woman could be a voter too? In theory, yes. An old principle adopted in Portuguese juridical tradition said *Homo est etiam femina*, meaning that the choice of male words implied that women were subject to the laws and protected by them as well as men. If this principle were considered effectively, women would have

---

1 “The standard of currency in Brazil was, until 1942, the *milreis*. One milreis was written 1\$000. The fractional currency was the *real* (plural *reis*), 1,000 to the *milreis*. Thus two hundred *reis* would be written \$200. The *conto* was used in quoting large sums of money. It equaled 1,000 milreis and was written 1:000\$000. In 1942, the *milreis* was renamed the *cruzeiro*.” DEAN, Warren. “The Industrialization of São Paulo, 1880-1945”. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2012. p. 3.

been able to vote and express their own political opinions.

For José Antônio Pimenta Bueno, whose noble title was Visconde of São Vicente, a respected jurist, and an imperial advisor, women did not have political rights guaranteed by the Constitution (an important opinion, although not unanimous):

“[...] in the well-expressed terms of Art. 90 of the Constitution, only the mass of active citizens enjoys political rights, and consequently, inactive citizens in the sense of public law do not enjoy such rights. Brazilian women are included in the latter class, whatever might otherwise be their abilities and skills.” (SÃO

VICENTE, 1857 p. 470, our translation)

What was the basis of Pimenta Bueno’s interpretation? In the Constitution of 1824, one reads that only “active citizens” can enjoy political rights. This expression’s origin gives valuable clues as to what the Constitution’s authors meant when they used this expression. Classifying the population in terms of active and inactive was a typical idea of French politics from the end of the 18th century, where women (and children, the insane and

others) were “passive” (“inactive” in Brazilian legal vocabulary) citizens. They enjoyed civil rights and, therefore, could inherit, but not express opinions on political affairs.

Based on these French ideas that inspired the Brazilian Constitution, they did not allow women to vote. That implied that Brazilian women were also unable to vote. Thus, though Brazilian parliamentarians had not expressly clarified the issue of women’s political rights (and the Charter does not list who are the inactive citizens), the interpretation was that granting women’s suffrage was not intended by our legislators.

## THE FIRST ATTEMPT AT ELECTORAL REFORM

Privately, well-informed men showed themselves sensitive to the criticisms being made by women concerning the solution that had been found for the important question of political participation. **José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva** was one of them.

José Bonifácio worked to make Brazil independent from Portugal. In the political struggles involved,

---

he angered many people and ended up having to spend six years abroad, taking his family with him. In 1829, José Bonifácio returned to Brazil, and in June 1831, he took up politics once again by taking a seat in the Congress as a substitute for another deputy, who had been elected from the state of Bahia. Then he joined with **Manuel Alves Branco** to draft a bill that would have changed the entire way in which elections were carried out in Brazil. During that year, on July 28th, Branco went to the Chamber to present their proposal.

Manuel Alves Branco and José Bonifácio found inspiration in a similar proposal that had been discussed in the French assembly at the beginning of the same year. Article 3 of the bill proposed that women who were the heads of families (either being widowed or separated from their spouses) would have been able to vote in the primary elections, in which members of the local assemblies were chosen, as a sort of local government council. According to the bill, if the women heads of families did not want to go personally to the voting site, they could ask a close relative male, such as their eldest son or son-in-law, to vote in their name.

# JOSÉ BONIFÁCIO

1763 – 1838

**José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva** was born in Santos, São Paulo, in 1763 and died in Niterói (state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) in 1838. He studied law and natural sciences at the University of Coimbra (Portugal). He was recognized as an extraordinary geologist, and his erudition in other sciences was also much admired. After his studies, Silva returned to Brazil, and he played an active role in political independence movements, assuming the post of Empire's State Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister in 1822. He was elected a deputy to the Constituent Assembly in 1823 and was a member of the commission responsible for editing the Constitution's initial draft. Because of political disagreements with Emperor Dom Pedro I, he resigned his post and was forced to leave Brazil and spend six years in Europe. In 1829 he returned to Brazil and public life. He authored many scientific, literary, and political works.

***“Why should  
women obey laws  
that were written  
without their  
participation and  
consent?”***

*(SILVA, 1998, p. 327, our translation)*



# MANUEL ALVES BRANCO

—  
1797 – 1855



**Manuel Alves Branco** was born in Salvador (state of Bahia, Brazil) in 1797 and died in Niterói (state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) in 1855. He studied law at the University of Coimbra (Portugal). Manuel Aves Branco held many important political offices in the Empire, as a deputy (1830 to 1833), a senator (appointed in 1837), and a member of the State's Council (appointed in 1842). He chaired the Council of Ministers from 1847 to 1848. In 1835, he served the Empire as Minister in the posts of Justice, Foreign Affairs, the Empire, and the Treasury.

“The General Legislative Assembly of the Brazilian Empire decreed:

First Title – Electoral Qualifications

**Art. 1.** The right to vote in the Parochial Assemblies belongs to all Brazilian citizens who enjoy the exercise of political rights and have an annual liquid income of 100,000 reis.

**Art. 2.** Those that are denied to exercise this right:

1. Those under the age of 25 who have not been emancipated by law [...]

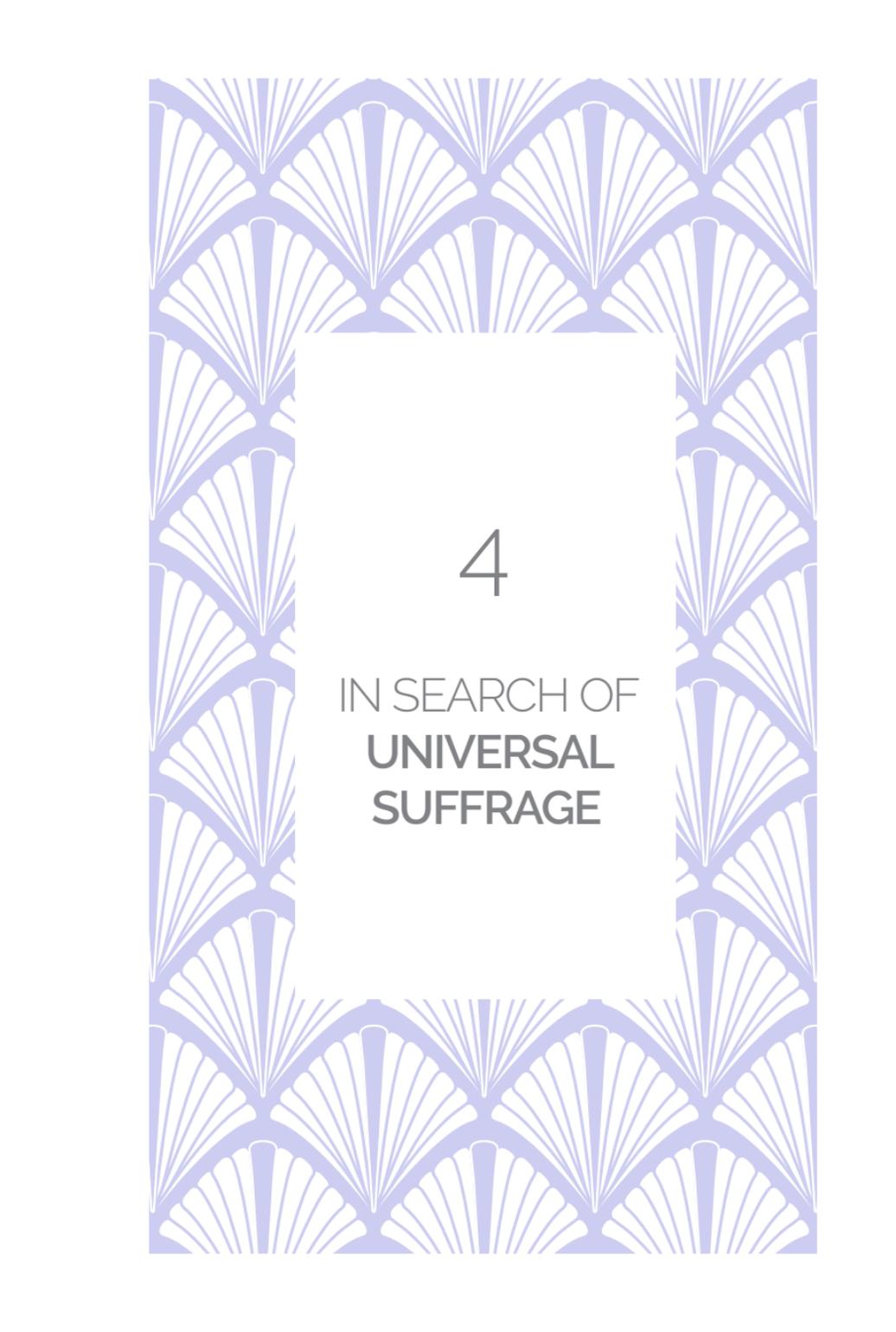
**Art. 3.** Mothers, widowed or separated of their husbands, who meet the necessary conditions for the exercise of the right to vote in the primary Assemblies, may give their vote through of one of their sons, sons-in-law, grandsons, or any other relative in default of one of these.”

*(BRASIL, 1831, our translation)*

Even though the proposed bill was not voted on or even debated because of the great political crisis of 1831, which led to the abdication of Emperor Dom Pedro I, it represented an advance in recognizing that women, when they were heads of families, should have the right to express their political wishes.

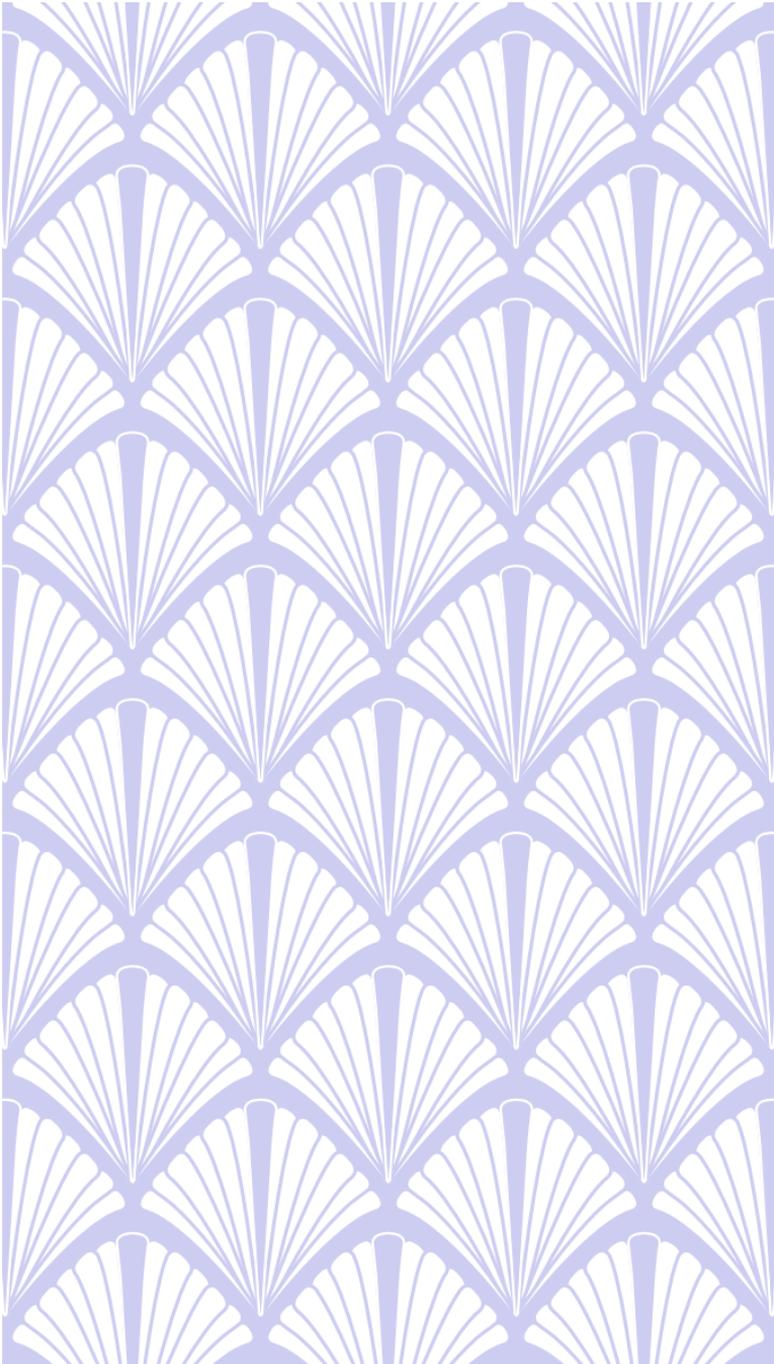
It is important to emphasize that the attempt at electoral reform in Brazil and the political changes in France were sustained by discussions over the extension of suffrage, whether it should be universal or partial, and over the kinds of restrictions that should be imposed on voters. The basis of Manuel Alves Branco and José Bonifácio's proposal was that political systems should consider heads of families, and not just those called active citizens, as responsible for the choice of the rulers.

These could have created complicated situations. For example, if a family's head (father) thought in a very conservative way and his adult children wanted a change, the will of the father would end up prevailing over his children's will and, in the end, politics would change very little.



4

IN SEARCH OF  
**UNIVERSAL  
SUFFRAGE**



The defenders of universal suffrage had much work to do to convince others that it would be good if more people could express themselves politically. It was feared that not all people would be able to make good political choices, especially people connected to others by a duty of obedience. Therefore, it was argued that women were not able to form an opinion developed through independent thought. Doubts like that were held about domestic servants, and members of religious orders, who had sworn oaths of obedience, and women. Because of these doubts, politicians on both sides of the Atlantic preferred to prevent such people from voting. As the supporters of universal suffrage and also those of partial suffrage did not agree, there were many experiments in the reform of the voting system in Europe and Brazil.

In the mid-1860s, defenders of the extension of the suffrage found new arguments to defend their cause by reading the work of **John Stuart Mill**, an English philosopher who emphatically defended women's moral uplift.

## MILL AND COMTE

The French thinker **Auguste Comte**'s works were also widely read in Brazil, especially by military personnel and engineers. Comte's philosophy came to be known as positivism. It espoused the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social phenomena. Comte's main works ran to ten large volumes, and that is why most people preferred to read summary versions of his thoughts or commentaries on his work.

Although Stuart Mill approved of Comte's philosophical proposal to adopt aspects of the scientific analysis of social affairs, their political differences were vast. While Mill called for universal suffrage for all qualified electors, that is, the literate, Comte disapproved of having many people interfering in government. He thought that it would open room for political passions, and that

good government meant that decisions should be made according to rigorously technical and scientific criteria.

Comte thought much like Rousseau, considering women less capable of understanding complex political affairs, which only men could master. However, Comte differed from Rousseau in one meaningful crucial way. Comte based his ideas of women on biological science, an area that gained great persuasive power among Western intellectuals in the 19th century.

Mill and Comte may never have met personally, but they were very familiar with each other's thinking. After reading Comte's first works in the 1830s, John Stuart Mill was intrigued by how his French colleague viewed women. For many years, the British thinker tried to convince Comte that the lack of interest on the part of the women of their time in public issues resulted from of the education that they received, which could and should be changed. Many letters were exchanged between them, but the French thinker did not budge. For Comte, women were biologically inferior to men, and their primary (and only) mission was to educate their children well and look after the home.

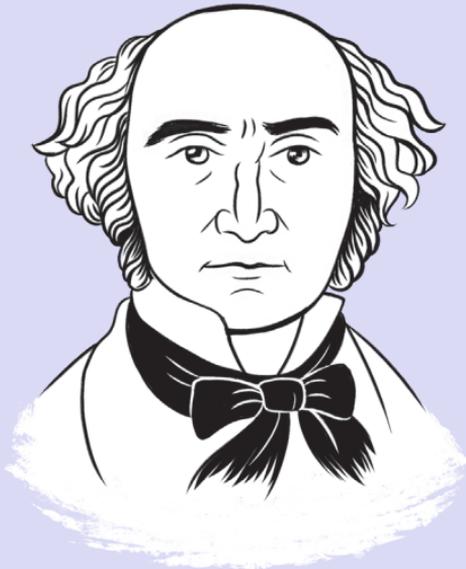
# JOHN STUART MILL

1806 – 1873

An influential writer and philosopher, **John Stuart Mill** was born in London (England) in 1806 and died in Avignon (France) in 1873. His father, James Mill, was also a philosopher and had educated his son rigorously, emphasizing humanistic education. From 1822 to 1858, John Stuart Mill worked in the East India Company, a trade organization that handled the relationship between England and its colony, India. Mill wrote for journals and published many of his books in those years, which were translated into various languages. In 1851, he married Harriet Taylor. The ideas that he shared with his wife on the liberation of women resulted in two very influential books: an essay on freedom and another on women's subjugation. He was a member of the House of Commons from 1865 to 1868. Among his many intellectual works, the most outstanding were: *A System of Logic* (1843), *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), *On Liberty* (1859), *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), and *The Subjection of Women* (1869).

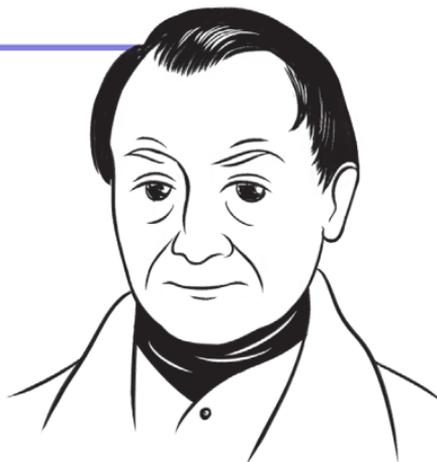
*“If women were socially and politically emancipated, they would be better educated and have a better practical perception of those things which their opinions influence and the points that I have raised show that such changes could perfect women’s participation in the formation of general public opinion.”*

*(MILL, 2009, p. 53, our translation)*



# AUGUSTE COMTE

1798 – 1857



**Auguste Comte** was born in Montpellier in Southern France in 1798 and died in Paris in 1857. At the age of 16, he was admitted to the prestigious *École Polytechnique in Paris*. Soon after that, he began to associate with the intellectual group led by Henri Saint Simon, who greatly influenced him. In 1824, he broke with Saint Simon over politics. He lived precariously on income from private lessons on mathematics until he became a professor at the Polytechnique in 1837 but was dismissed in 1844 because of psychological instability. In 1830, he published the first volume of his main work, *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, which he continued to publish up to its sixth volume in 1842. In 1853 he published the *Système de Politique Positive*, in four volumes, a work in which he developed his views on various aspects of social life: religion, language, and social behavior. In the Americas, while Comte's thought received some acceptance in Argentina, it was in Brazil and Mexico that Positivism inspired political currents that came to power. In Brazil, the Republican slogan "Order and Progress" was openly inspired by Comte.

“Even though it might be imperfect, biological science seems to me capable of establishing a sexed hierarchy, in demonstrating by anatomy and physiology that the female sex is constituted as a sort of basic infancy, which makes them inferior to the masculine sex.” *Letter from A. Comte to Stuart Mill, July 16th, 1843 (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1899, p. 231, our translation)*

“Let us not forget that what is in question is not making women rule society, but to know if it would not be better if society were ruled by men and by women, instead of being ruled only by men.” *Letter by Stuart Mill to A. Comte, August 30th, 1843 (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1899, p. 240, our translation)*

After almost a decade of exchanging letters with Comte, Mill seems to have gotten tired of the attempt to change his mind. In 1865, he published a book entitled *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, in which he harshly criticized the ideas of the philosopher. Mill's book soon came out in French and reached Brazilian bookstores.

## MILL'S INFLUENCE IN BRAZIL

The most educated Brazilian politicians read the books of Mill, especially the editions in French. By then, those deputies who wished to form only one opinion on the matter to debate with other parliamentarians were following the comments which came out in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, a publication that was very influential at the time and whose collection is housed in the chamber library.

Curiously, Stuart Mill's works were much cited in parliamentary debates by both his supporters and opponents. That was the case of the conservative deputy Francisco Belisário Souza, who published in 1871 the book *O sistema eleitoral no Império* (The Electoral System in the Empire), in which he called for ending the indirect vote and criticized the system for not requiring literacy for voting. Though he agreed with the British philosopher's demand that a voter should read and write to vote, Belisário found Mill too radical.

Other influential men agreed with Mill. A notable defender of the idea of expanding the franchise was the deputy and writer **José Martiano de Alencar**, who argued that the democratic political system should expand. Alencar, who is today better known

for his literary works, also wrote legal works, which historians consider important for understanding how public figures in the empire thought.

Starting in 1859, Alencar began publishing in the *Jornal do Commercio*, a prestigious paper that came out in the Corte (now Rio de Janeiro), a series of essays on the Brazilian electoral system. In 1868, he decided to bring out all that he had written on the subject in *O sistema representativo* (The Representative System). In this work, he acknowledged that the Luso-Brazilian judicial tradition considered (married) women to be incapable in civic terms, a condition that compromised the exercise of their political rights. Even so, José de Alencar thought that civil incapacity should not prevent women from participating in politics provided that they could read, write, and had enough income. For Alencar, it would be fair to admit women among voters because they were interested in society, although such admission should not happen immediately.

# JOSÉ DE ALENCAR

—  
1829 – 1877

**José Martiniano de Alencar** was born in Fortaleza, in the province of Ceará, in 1829 and died in Rio de Janeiro in 1877. He was educated in law at the Faculty of São Paulo and had a long political and literary career. He chaired the province of Ceará for three years, from 1834 and again for a few months in 1840. He was a deputy for the Conservative Party from 1861 to 1875. He was Minister of State in the post of Justice from 1868 to 1870. He wrote many literary and legal works, being one of the leading exponents of Romanticism in Brazil. Those of José de Alencar's main novels with female protagonists are *Lucíola* (1861), *Iracema* (1865), *Diva* (1865), and *Senhora* (1875).

*“A legitimate democracy demands from science and later from the law the confirmation of the legitimate representation of inactive political rights. Civilization will one day concede them. Then, that part of humanity which in civil life communes in our existence, will not have to be barred from the political community; those who are wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of citizens, and who have as much, if not greater interest in society than they do, will not be an ignored part of the state. They will participate in political life by way of their legitimate organs.”*

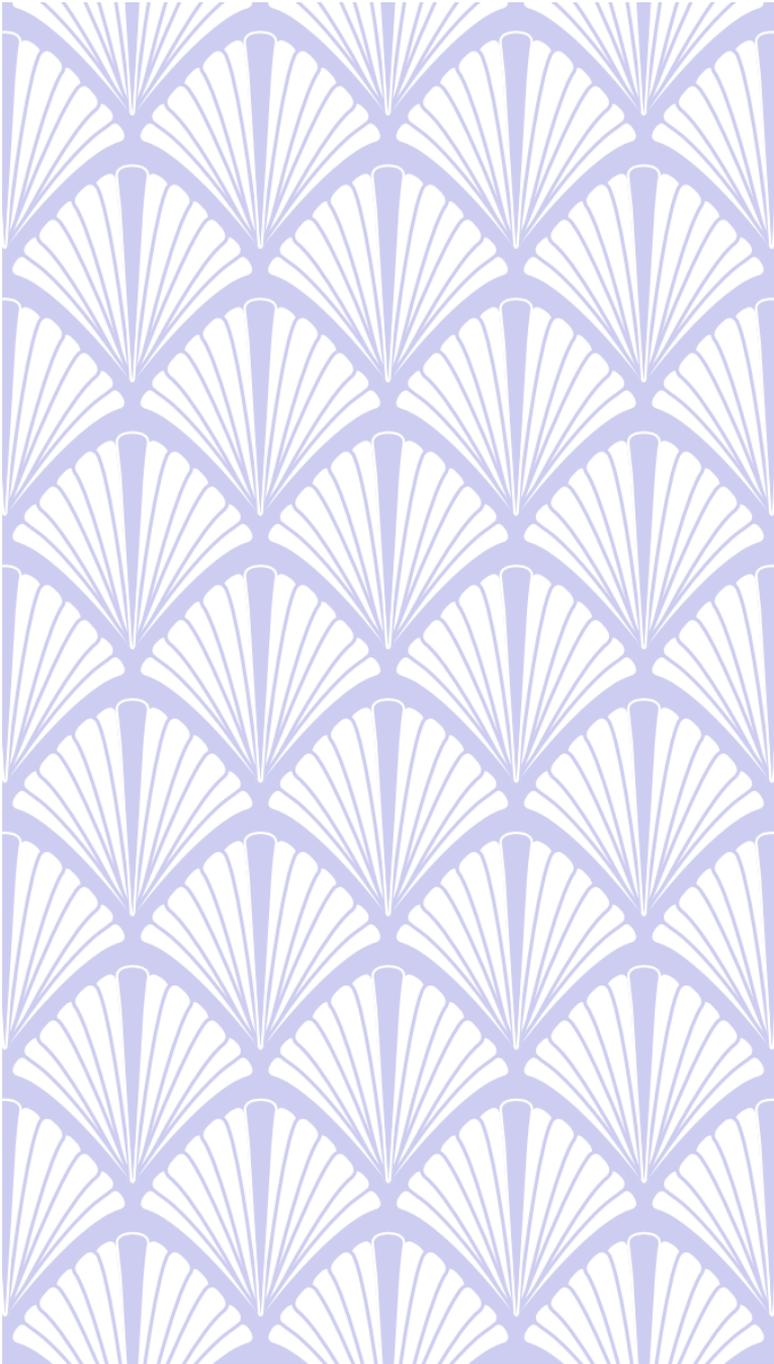
*(ALENCAR, 1868, p. 82, our translation)*





5

THE  
**SARAIVA**  
LAW



In April of 1879, the Chamber of Deputies discussed again a proposal for electoral reform, which was the perfect occasion for liberal deputies, whose members included advocates of universal suffrage, to express their thinking. They were not even close to a majority in that congress, but they attended all the sessions and spoke whenever they could. Quotations from John Stuart Mill were used in their speeches.

**“Deputy Cezar Zama:** [...] Two years ago, convinced of the truth of the idea, I became a propagandist for active and passive votes, which in my opinion, should be conceded to women in political affairs.

**Deputy Freitas Coutinho:** God save us from that!

[...]

**Deputy Martim Francisco:** A woman is not only precious in this vast organization called humanity because of her aptitude for carrying out political functions (applause), but also the education of women is, without a doubt, the basis of national education. The aptitudes which we develop, which makes us good fathers and good citizens, were perfected and primed by the thoughts and ideas that our mothers have rooted in our hearts and souls (applause)." (FRANCISCO, 1879, p. 598-599, our translation)

The next year, in March of 1880, a Liberal Party senator from Bahia, José Antônio Saraiva, became the Council of Ministers' chair with the goals of drafting a reform of electoral legislation and correcting problems in the public accounts.

"From what I have just expounded, the Chamber of Deputies already knows the program of the cabinet. The Liberal Party has listed in its program many reforms. The ministries do not and cannot have broad programs. They must choose the reforms of their party that are most urgent and expend their efforts on realizing

them. The electoral reform seems to us to be the most urgent, and that is the one that we will offer for consideration to the Chamber in this special session." (SARAIVA, 1880, p. 10, our translation)

The electoral reform developed by the Saraiva cabinet was the culmination of a public debate that had taken almost a decade. Its goal was to raise the qualifications for voting and abolish the two rounds of voting. The reform resulted in Decree no. 3,029 of January 9th, 1881, which came to be known as the Saraiva Law. The immediate effect was a reduction of the number of voters because of greater rigor in the system of qualifications in terms of income and education, and the institutionalization of the non-compulsory vote. Among the measures proposed were the recognition of scientific titles, such as degrees in law, medicine, or dentistry, as proving the educational qualification of the voter.

#### "On Voters

**Art. 2** All Brazilian citizens can vote, in terms of articles 6, 91, and 92 of the Imperial Constitution, who have a liquid income not inferior to

200\$000 from property, industry, commerce or employment. [...]

**Art. 4** Independently of evidence, those are considered to have legal income:

[...]

X – those who have legally recognized scientific or literary diplomas from any faculty, academy, school, or national or foreign institution." (*BRASIL, 1881, p. 1-3, our translation*)

The new electoral law opened the possibility for women with diplomas to vote. Would it be that the judges responsible for registering voters would interpret the Constitution literally, that is would find that only male Brazilian citizens could register?

Based on Art. 4 of the Saraiva Law, the dentist Isabel de Souza Mattos, a resident of São José do Norte, in Rio Grande province (in the South), registered to vote in 1887. When the first Republican government called elections for the Constituent Assembly in 1890, Dr. de Souza came to the electoral board with her 1887 registration document. However, the chair of the Board did not allow her to vote.

# JOSEFINA A. DE AZEVEDO

—  
1851 – ?



**Josefina Álvares de Azevedo** was born in 1851 in the city of Recife (province of Pernambuco). She was the cousin of the writer Manuel Antônio Álvares de Azevedo, the author of *Lira dos 20 anos*. Besides noting her suffragist activities, which the pages of the journal *A Família* are evidence for, we know little about her life.

*“It is necessary that a woman also be a thinking being, and as an extremely important part of the great national spirit and as an emancipated individual, be admitted to the struggle in which the fate of the country at stake. Freedom and equality are always one. A woman, like a man, must compete for the representation of her country. We want the right to take part in the elections, to elect and be elected, just like men, on equal terms. Either we will be outside the regime of laws created by men, or we will also have the right to legislate for all. Without this, equality is a utopia, if not a jibe thrown against all of us.”* (AZEVEDO, 1889, p. 1, our translation)

## THE FEMALE VOTE IN THE PRESS

Isabel Mattos was not alone in her struggle. Many women, often educators and some pharmacists, writers, and dentists, thought it was the time to win the right to vote. One of them was the educator **Josefina Álvares de Azevedo**, who had begun to publish in December 1888 the suffragist daily journal *A Família*, at first in São Paulo. In the second half of 1889, Josefina moved to Rio de Janeiro, where she ended up working with many suffragists and the well-known writers Júlia Lopes de Almeida and Inês Sabino. *A Família* promoted a campaign for women's suffrage during the Constituent Assembly's work and in the following years. This form of publication, written by women for women readers, was known in various parts of Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro, the country's capital, dozens of female periodicals are known from the 19th century. The historian June Hahner was the first researcher to draw our attention to the vibrant activity of women journalists in Brazil, in the second half of the century. Recently, Constance Duarte expanded Hahner's search to other

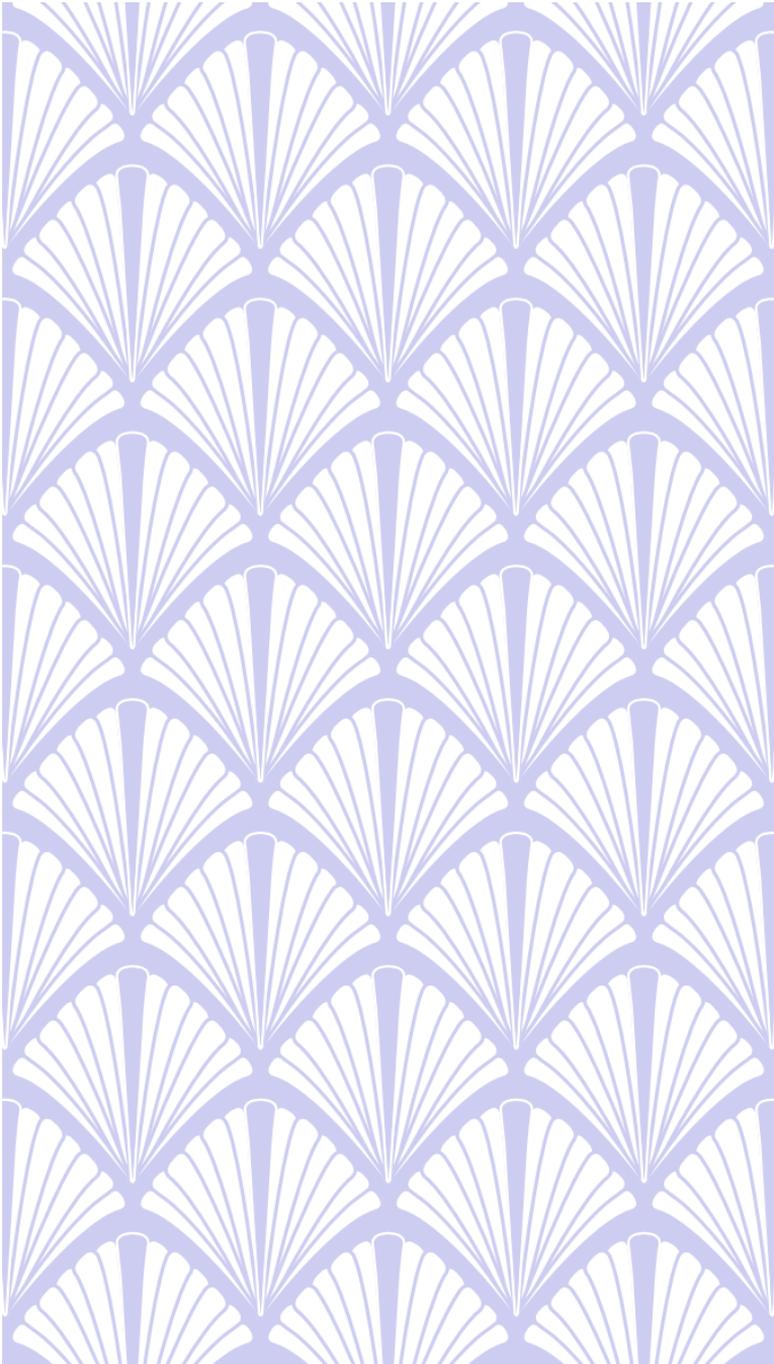
regions with surprising findings. Both authors are listed in the bibliography.

Azevedo's innovational project was the combination of journalism with the campaign for suffrage and the political consciousness of women. The journal *A Família* was edited from 1888 to 1897.



6

A REPUBLIC  
OF MEN



In November 1889, a civil-military coup ended the monarchy. The republicans decided to call a Constituent Assembly to ensure the legitimacy of the new government. At once, three republican groups met to work out preliminary proposals for the Constitution. The Minister of Justice combined their three drafts into one text, which was edited by the Treasury Minister Rui Barbosa, a Parliament veteran. This proposal used the term “o eleitor” (a masculine word for “voter”) to designate a citizen who was qualified to vote, which left unresolved whether women could vote.

While all this was happening, the suffragists of *A Família* continued to campaign through the journal and by lobbying the elected deputies. They were few but very active. Josefina Álvares de Azevedo, for example, wrote a play entitled *The*

*Female Vote*, which was performed in the *Recreio Dramático* theater several times in those years.

When the debates of the 21 states commission of representatives began, the deputies Lopes Trovão, Leopoldo Bulhões, and Casimiro advocated that the right to vote should be extended to educated, unmarried women. In December 1890, the Bahia deputy César Zama, another veteran of the Parliament, also spoke in favor of it.



CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, BY AURÉLIO DE FIGUEIREDO (1896).

[Source: *Collections of the Museum of the Republic*; Ibram/Minc. Authorization 12/2016]

The subject was on the agenda in the first discussion of the proposed constitution, in January 1891, when Zama allied with deputy Sá Andrade to present an amendment favoring the vote for women. Simultaneously, **Joaquim Saldanha Marinho**, a well-known senior republican deputy, presented an even more comprehensive amendment for women's suffrage than Zama's. Marinho's proposal was endorsed by 32 constituent deputies. Unfortunately, Zama and Saldanha's amendments were voted down.

When the proposed Constitution entered the second round of discussion, also in January of 1891, the proponents of women's suffrage presented again their amendments, with modifications intended to attract support from other parliamentarians. These also failed.

The opponents of women's suffrage used several arguments. Deputy Serzedelo Correia held that women should not vote because the exercise of political rights threatened their delicate sentiments, as well as the preservation of the family. Along this line of thinking, deputy Lauro Sodré, from the state of Pará, basing himself on positivism, held that women should only devote themselves to their families. From another direction,

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# JOAQUIM SALDANHA MARINHO

1816 – 1895



**Joaquim Saldanha Marinho** was a lawyer, journalist, and important politician during the Empire. He was born in Olinda (state of Pernambuco) in May of 1816 and died in Rio de Janeiro on May 27th, 1895. He studied law in Recife and was a public prosecutor in the state of Ceará for a decade until he was transferred to Corte (Rio de Janeiro) in 1848, where he practiced law and acted in publishing. He served several terms as a deputy beginning in 1861 and governed the provinces of Minas Gerais (1866 to 1867) and São Paulo (1867 to 1868). He had a significant role in the Masonic order, and he advocated republicanism. In the 1890 election, he became a Senator for the Federal District (Rio de Janeiro) in the Constituent Assembly. He left a vast collection of legal work in the form of treatises, opinions, and memoirs.

deputy Lacerda Coutinho held that women were not competent in legal terms because they were not subject to being called up in times of war like men were. Similar arguments were employed by deputy José Moniz Freire, of Espírito Santo, in the January 12th session.

“Given that all citizens are obliged to offer service to their country regardless of their condition (of being literate), and are equally required to promote the public good without differentiation of such a degree, I think that one should extend to all the right to vote. [...] With the greatest respect which is owed to the authors of similar ideas [of extending the vote to women] and those that adopt it, I have to declare, Mr. President, that this aspiration seems to me to be immoral and anarchistic [protests], because the day when we make it law by a vote of Congress, we will have decreed the dissolution of the Brazilian family [protests].” (FREIRE, 1891, p. 456-457, our translation)

The most significant speech in defense of political equality between the genders was made by deputy Costa Machado from Minas Gerais in the January

27th session, when the chances for granting women the vote were looking bleak. His long speech was followed attentively by those present. Machado criticized the existing political trends among the 268 constituent deputies, who, in his opinion, were responsible for rejecting the suffragist amendments. Among these groups were the apostolate positivist supporters, which was a radical form of adhesion to the Auguste Comte's philosophy, and the moderate positivists, who followed the line of the deputy Júlio de Castilho, from Rio Grande do Sul.

Another active current opposed to female suffrage was composed of politicians who were trained in liberal thought, but who feared the possible effects of expanding the franchise during the transition to a republican regime. These constituent deputies thought that it would not be convenient to expand the universe of voters.

Among the liberal deputies who were opposed to the female vote in 1891 was the lawyer from Rio Grande do Sul, Joaquim Francisco de Assis Brasil. Three years after the end of the Constituent Assembly, Assis Brasil published a book in which he justified his position. The book was published in Argentina when the author was representing Brazil.

“To allow or forbid women to exercise the right to vote means nothing less than including or not including half the human species in the act of voting. However, it does not seem to me that this material consideration of number would have any other real importance for the question of the female vote. In effect, and I am not just speaking about our country, one should expect that the only real change resulting from the intervention of voters from the other sex would be to duplicate the number of the existing electoral body. It is certain that, given our present education, ladies would distribute themselves exactly proportionally to the existing parties, or those who were forming, following thus to their husbands, or their fathers, or whomever they were connected by feeling. Their incorporation into the register of voters would be then, if not prejudicial, as it would increase the difficulties of handling the voting mass amplified in this way, pointless, as the militant forces would not be altered.” (*BRASIL, 1895, p. 41, our translation*)

Oddly enough, Assis Brasil played an important role forty years later in granting the right to vote to women when he took part in the commission of jurists tasked with working out new rules for the 1933 elections. At that point, the jurist was convinced that the time had arrived for women to vote.

How did this story end? The final text of the 1891 Constitution did not make it clear that women could or could not vote. Despite this ambiguity, voter registration boards interpreted literally the word “citizen” contained in the charter and thus rejected insistent demands for registering women who were adult and educated.<sup>2</sup>

## THOUGHTS ON THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION AND POLITICAL RIGHTS IN BRAZIL

Several constitutional experiments mark the political history of independent Latin America. In contrast to the U.S. constitutional tradition, Latin American nations have crafted many constitutions

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2 As has been said previously, the word “cidadão” in Portuguese can be both masculine or mixed gender.

in the course of their histories. The country with the fewest constitutions was Mexico, with four. Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador all had more than five. There have been seven constitutional experiments in Brazil: those of 1824, 1891, 1934, 1937, 1946, 1967 and 1988.

Therefore, when the political elites in the Americas have met to draw up new norms for governance and for sharing power, these occasions have to be carefully examined, as the constitutional assemblies debated crucial elements of political systems, such as the definition of citizenship, the powers of the executive, and the degree of independence of the judiciary.

In Brazil, with each change in the form of government or in the processes of democratization after an authoritarian cycle, the political actors met to work out new institutional rules for political life. The first constitution, drawn up immediately after the separation from Portugal in 1822, was written under the heavy influence of French political philosophers, especially Benjamin Constant, an author who was much read in Brazil at the time. Politicians also had works of Thomas Jefferson in their private libraries, specially his book *Manual of Parliamentary Practice* translated into French.

Coming out of an intense revolution, France sought to establish conditions for a representative government under several constitutional experiments' guidelines (JAUME, 1989). Constant's works and political actions were decisive in ensuring the political stability of the French nation.

In Brazil, Constant's ideas on the separation of powers, bicameral legislatures, and the private property defense as the foundation of individual freedom were adopted in their entirety. Inspired by Constant, Brazilian constitutional thinkers also adopted the idea of a neutral "Moderating Power" exercised by the Monarch. As proposed by Constant, the neutral power had the prerogative of balancing the deliberative power of Parliament and ordering elections if it judged that the Cabinet, formed by the parliamentary majority, had lost political support.

Like Constant, Brazilian politicians, who were trying to consolidate the country's independence after 1822, saw the importance of defining stable institutional rules in a constitutional text to support the work of the government and prevent civil war (HOLMES, 1984, p. 131). As a slave society, the preservation of order was imperative for the political system. Because of this, the divergences among the elites were contained, initially, with the imposition of

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the 1824 Charter on restive provinces that upsurged for more autonomy. Later the pacification work among the elite was promoted by the monarch's neutral "moderating power". The so-called pacification either took the form of the suppression of more vehement leaders or cooptation.

Thus the country's political life went on for 65 years until a coup d'état promoted by military dissatisfied with the monarchical government, associated with republican activists, removed the royal family from power in November 1889. At this point, the intellectual influence of Benjamin Constant had diminished among intellectual elites, who were looking for answers to new problems which had arisen. It was feared that the executive power could not respond flexibly and rapidly to the problems which might have arisen if Constant's model, which granted a great deal of deliberative power to the legislative branch, continued to be followed. The works of other French liberal thinkers continue to circulate in Congress libraries, and the capital and private collections.

So, while the works of Benjamin Constant still were on the shelves of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate libraries, there were also works of other constitutionalists who influenced Brazilian

politicians. One example is Édouard Laboulaye, who is little read today, but who was read by the politicians responsible for constructing the republic's institutions. In the U.S., Laboulaye is better remembered today for his role in the donation of the Statue of Liberty.

Laboulaye's *Questions constitutionnelles* (Constitutional Problems) was often cited in parliamentary debates in Brazil in those years. In other parts of the Americas, this work was immediately translated into Spanish after its publication in 1872. In Brazil, the work's success was added to the favorable reception that his previous work, such as *Paris en Amérique* (1863) and *Histoire Politique des États Unis* (1866), had received.

Laboulaye brought Benjamin Constant's political thought (on which he commented) and that of Alexis Tocqueville up to date. Laboulaye shared with the later author an admiration for the U.S. political system and tried to explain to French readers his impressions on how the representative political system functioned in the United States.

Within the French philosophical tradition, Laboulaye recognized the existence of natural rights, which the law must preserve, but criticized the French constitutionalist tradition, which

was accustomed to declarations of rights in absolute terms. Conversely, the author added, the declarations of rights found in the U.S. Constitution were written in a precise way in order to orient ordinary legislators so that they could craft laws (LABOULAYE, 1872, p. 38).

The Brazilian Constitution of 1891 followed this orientation. It did not have a preamble where the concepts of freedom or equality would be invoked as fundamental principles of the political system. Influenced by new ideas on constitutions and citizenship and fearful of the formerly enslaved population, which had been freed in May 1888, the republican Constitutional Assembly members opted not to invoke fundamental rights based on a diffuse idea of the sovereignty of the people.

Concerning the requirements for citizenship, Laboulaye contributed with a formulation that would be cited in the debates on women's suffrage during the assembly: the exercise of the vote is not an inherent human right, but a prerogative that the state confers based on social interests, thus justifying the rejection of universal suffrage.

The Brazilian Constituent Assembly members combined two systems of thought, which were apparently contradictory, in invoking Laboulaye

and Herbert Spencer's ideas. While the first writer stated that it was the task of legislation to promote spiritual progress (Rolland, 2018), Spencer believed that social evolution depended on the population's biological improvement. In the future, one can see from both authors, society would reach an advanced stage of civilization, either through institutional improvements or through state intervention where customs were considered primitive. The Brazilian Constituent Assembly delegates based themselves on the two systems of thought to formulate the educational policy foreseen in the Charter, that is, they delegated to the states whether to institute a system of public education. In practice, this measure represented the maintenance of high levels of illiteracy among the population, which reinforced the restriction of political participation.

The Constitution of February 24th, 1891, resulted from this environment of political debate. While at first, the charter adopted a federalist regime, presumably inspired by the U.S., it also contained centralizing and decentralizing elements creating a federalism that was adjusted to the political reality of the time and place.

Another extrapolation from the French author, which also had repercussions for the thinking of Brazilian movers and shakers, was his recommendation to separate religion and state. Thus, the 1891 charter established a secular state and denied religious organizations members the right to vote. The draining away of the Church's power can be seen in this passage:

"Declaration of Rights:

**Art. 72.** The Constitution guarantees to Brazilians and resident foreigners in the country the inviolability of the rights of freedom, individual security, and property in the following terms:

§ 6 Education provided in public establishments will be secular.

§ 7 No church or religion will benefit from official subsidies, nor have relations of dependence or alliance with the government of the Union, or the states. The diplomatic representation of Brazil at the Holy See will not imply any violation of this principle." (*BRASIL, 1891, our translation*)

In fiscal terms, federal order adopted in 1891 and confirmed in a reform in 1926 granted the Union the right to decree taxes on imports. The states were given a significant source of income, which was taxes on exports. Especially important for the exporting states were coffee and rubber, the main commodities sold by Brazil in the first decades of the 20th century. As only the northern states produced rubber and four states in the center-south produced coffee, this system sharpened the inequality between the export regions and the others. Another important economic measure in the 1891 Charter gave the states the right to legislate on access to land and the demarcation of property. This measure reinforced the concentration of land ownership in Brazil.

**“Art. 9.** It is the exclusive competence of the states to decree taxes:

1. On exports of its own products;
2. On rural and urban properties;

[...]

In criminal matters, the states had no power to deny the extradition of criminals from their territories.

[...]

**Art. 66.** The states are denied:

[...]

4° To deny the extradition of criminals wanted by the courts in other states or the Federal District, according to the laws of the Union which regulate this matter (Art. 34, no. 32)"

*(BRASIL, 1891, our translation)*

Of importance for women's suffrage, the Constitution made use of masculine nouns, "eleitores" (voters), "cidadãos" (citizens), which led to ambiguity in the interpretation of the text of the Charter. This ambiguity was a serious obstacle for the extension of the right to vote for women, as noted before.

**"Art 70.** Voters are citizens above the age of 21 years who have registered in accordance with the law.

§1 Those who may not be registered as voters for federal or state elections are:

1° Beggars;

2° Illiterates;

3° The lower ranks (of the armed forces) except for graduates of military schools of advanced instruction;

4° Members of monastic religious orders, companies, congregations, or communities of any denomination who are subject to vows of

obedience, rule, or statute, which entails the renunciation of individual freedom.

§2 Citizens who may not be registered cannot be elected to office." (BRASIL, 1891, our translation)

Thirty-two years after its adoption, in 1926, the Charter was revised. The political environment was different. The small number of activists for suffrage who had lobbied the Constituent Assembly delegates in 1890-1891 had been replaced by large numbers of suffragist groups and feminists existing in the country. The parliamentarians' answer was to increase the power of the federal government to determine the qualifications for exercising the rights of citizenship. The states were given no right to have their own election rules, as stated below:

**"Art. 6. The Federal Government cannot intervene in the internal affairs of the states, except for:**

[...]

**g) the right to vote or be elected, as established by the Constitution."** (BRASIL, 1891, our translation)

These were the legal obstacles of the political actions of the groups fighting for women's suffrage

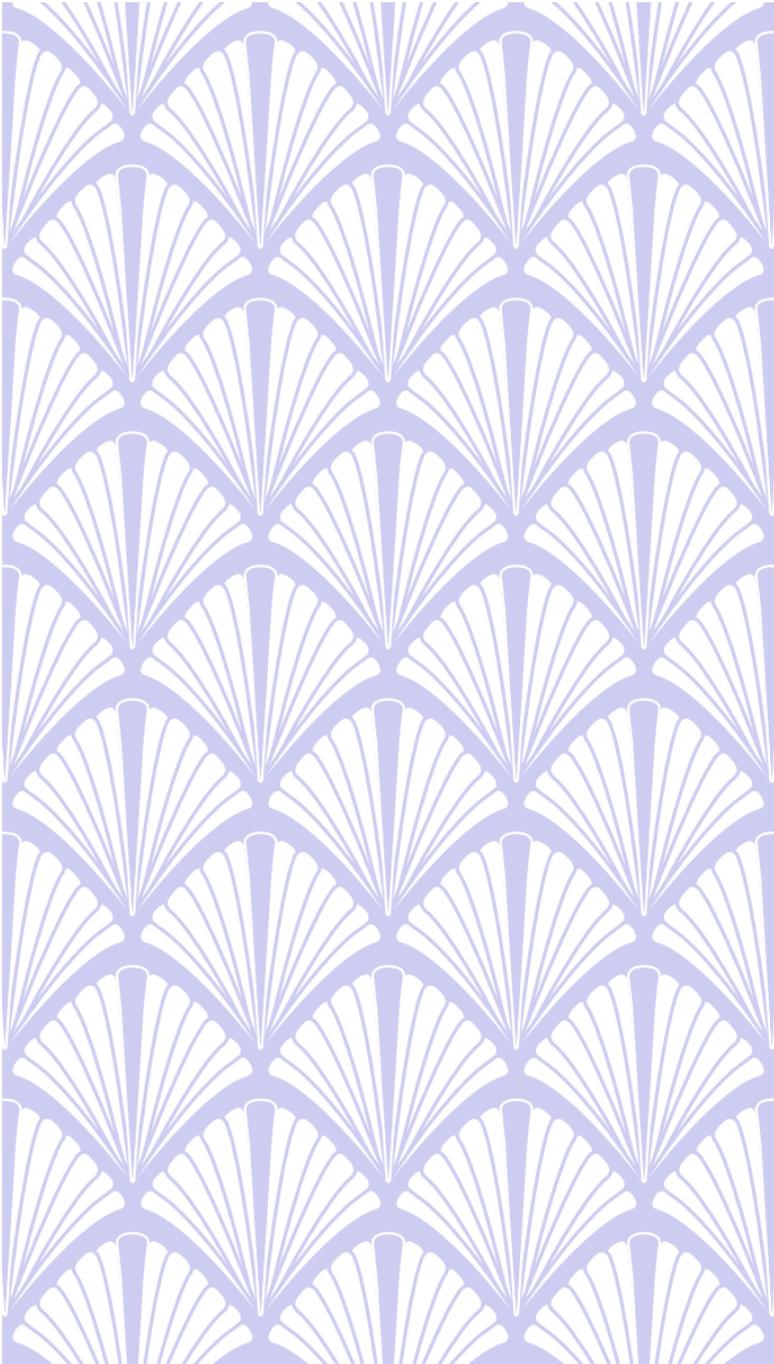
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in Brazil. The political solution to the deadlock came from a centralizing regime of exception: the government of Getúlio Vargas in 1932.



7

WOMEN  
EDUCATORS  
**FOR FEMALE  
SUFFRAGE**



Twenty years after the Constituent Assembly, a new group of women took a stand against political inequality: women educators, responsible for children's literacy in the country's major cities. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, there were some 5,000 women teachers, according to the 1920 census.

In late 1910, Daltro tried to attend the meetings that members of the Historical Institute were sponsoring, to discuss the organization of an institution concerned with the indigenous (a public entity for indigenous assistance). She was prevented from taking part in these meetings and had to stay in a separate room where she could only hear what was being said. Daltro rejected public policies that involved indigenous Catholic evangelization, despite that, she could do nothing to change the direction of the discussion. The experience irritated

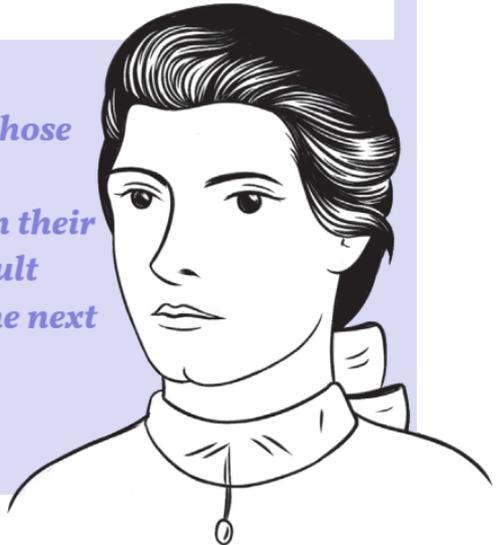
# LEOLINDA DE FIGUEIREDO DALTRO

1860 – 1935

**Leolinda de Figueiredo Daltro** was born in Bahia in the 1860s. She used to introduce herself as a daughter of an indigenous mother and a Portuguese father. Recently it was claimed by a Brazilian historian that she was a black woman. She got married very young and, after separating from her husband, raised her five children by herself. She lived by teaching and espoused political causes that few dared to embrace at that time: defense of the indigenous, women's education and suffrage. She founded the Women's Republican Party in 1910, was a candidate for mayor in 1919 and candidate for federal deputy in 1933. She died in May 1935, a victim of a vehicle accident in Rio de Janeiro.

*"They (women) are those who educate future citizens and have on their shoulders the difficult task of preparing the next generations."*

(DALTRO, 1916, our translation)



her greatly, and with time this feeling was transformed into disappointment. As she had lived with indigenous groups, she judged that she knew the issue and felt able to offer an essential contribution to the debate. This episode, which she described in her work, *Da catechese dos índios no Brasil* (On the Catechism of the indigenous in Brazil), which was published many years later, convinced her that without the right to vote and without professional education, women would never be listened by powerful men nor would they be able to build autonomous lives, as an example of what she had been facing by herself.

While she was trying to follow the debate on indigenous issues, Daltro met with a group of women to officially register the Women's Republican Party on December 17th, 1910. Its goals were to fight for the vote for women and free women from all forms of exploitation. The group would go on to represent suffragists in the federal capital in public meetings with the authorities, marches in the streets, and petitions to the legislature.

Inspired by the British suffragists, Daltro decided that the Women's Republican Party needed to have a banner and that affiliates had to carry a visible symbol whenever they were in public.



STUDENTS OF THE ORSINA DA FONSECA SCHOOL MARCH TOWARDS THE CATETE PALACE. [Source: *Revista da Semana*, September 30th, 1911]

## THE ORSINA DA FONSECA SCHOOL

Counting on the support of her friend, the first wife of President Hermes da Fonseca (1910-1914), Daltro set up a school for women in the capital. Inaugurated on June 24th, 1911, and located in the center of Rio de Janeiro, the Orsina da Fonseca School distinguished itself by training its students for professional posts, with subject matter such as typing and the foundations of nursing, as well as Portuguese and Mathematics. By developing such abilities, the students could find better jobs than

they would have in factories, trade or domestic service.

The Orsina de Fonseca School had a precarious existence. At times, the new government would try to close the school and take back the building, and Leolinda would ask for a meeting with the authorities where she would plead for keeping it open. When a problem arose with the building (and there were many, as it was old), Leolinda would take on the task. After all, she was the kind of person who dealt with problems in a practical way.

For all her dedication to the project, the survival of the school depended on the goodwill of the public authorities, which was often in short supply. At any moment, the school could have been closed, something that shows that keeping open public schools for educating women was not considered a government's job.

## THE FIRST LEGISLATIVE SUCCESSES

That is how things were when the Chamber of Deputies enacted new rules for elections in 1916 (Law no. 3,139 of August 2nd), which established

how voter registration should be carried out in the Federal District (Rio de Janeiro) and the former Federal Territory of Acre (BRASIL, 1916). Protesting the new law, that same month, an educator from Belo Horizonte named Mariana de Noronha Horta petitioned the deputies to approve women's suffrage. This act was the first formal instance of a woman asking for political rights in the Chamber records. In December of that year, Leolinda Daltro sent a plea in the name of the Women's Republican Party. In the same month, socialist deputy Maurício de Lacerda spoke in favor of universal suffrage and mentioned to the other parliamentarians that he had received Daltro's document. He emphasized the following passage with the heartfelt arguments of the teacher:

"It is really not just that an uneducated man should have the right to vote and intervene in public affairs, and at the same time, to deny to educated women, of which there are many, mainly in the capital, the same right. The great majority of municipal teachers in this city are women. It means that they are who educate the young. If the law gives them such a great responsibility, if the state recognizes their

capacity for such an important office, which is educating and instructing the young, if the official Teachers School gives them a diploma which empowers them for this difficult task, how can one accept that this same state can deny them the choice of who should be the representatives of the country in the legislative assemblies and the higher posts in public administration? It is the height of absurdity."

*(DALTRO, 1916, our translation)*

Leolinda Daltro was not satisfied with petitions asking for the vote. When the carnival was held in February 1917, she organized an allegorical float called "The Vote for Women", which was part of the Fenianos (Fenian) Bloc.

In June of the same year, Mauricio de Lacerda introduced a bill to change the voting laws, expanding women's voting rights and reformulate rules for voter registration. The Committee on the Constitution and Justice, however, rejected the bill as unconstitutional.

The matter did not remain restricted to the political realm and reached the streets. Women Should Vote? The press enjoyed ridiculing this, as shown in the example from the weekly journal

O Malho. Clearly, it was said that if women were given the vote, the world would be turned upside down. Really?



THE WOMEN'S VOTE. [Source: *O Malho*, June 23rd, 1917]

## PATRIOTIC WOMEN

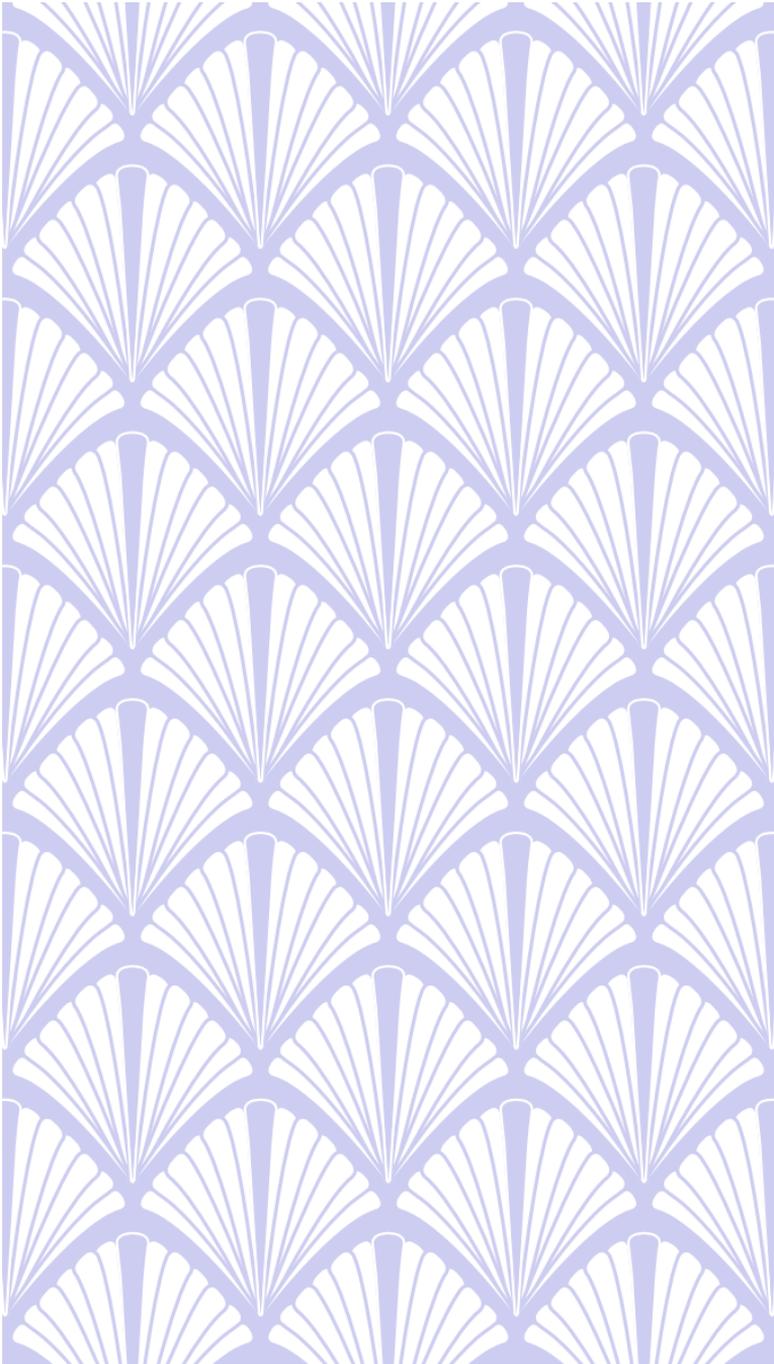
In 1917, Brazil entered the First World War after Brazilian merchant ships were torpedoed and sunk. At the end of October, the Brazilian government abandoned neutrality and declared war on Germany. The press followed the lead of the sentiments of the residents of Rio de Janeiro and encouraged patriotic demonstrations.

In this spirit, Daltro decided that her students should take part in the military mobilization efforts and organized fencing classes for them. These classes were conducted in the main plaza in the center of the city, where the Republic had been proclaimed (in 1889), known as the Campo de Santana (Santana Field). Even today, this is a place filled with centenarian trees, in which students from other schools sat mocking Daltro's students, who was not at all happy with what that boys were doing. For the politicians, the challenge from Daltro was obvious. If taking up arms was a requirement for the right to vote, women were willing to defend the country with courage and commitment.



8

THE  
BRAZILIAN  
FEDERATION  
FOR  
WOMEN'S  
PROGRESS



In those years, another suffragist appeared in the city of Rio de Janeiro and began to write articles and give interviews for magazines aimed at women. She was **Bertha Maria Júlia Lutz**, known as Bertha Lutz. Unlike Daltro, Lutz was a pacifist and was horrified by any form of mobilization for war. She was not an educator, but she did come from a very well-educated family. Her father was Adolpho Lutz, a doctor, scientist, and descendent of Swiss immigrants, living in São Paulo in the middle of the 19th century. Both Bertha and Leolinda supported the right to vote for women, but disagreed on almost everything else, especially on how this right should be achieved.

In 1918, having trained in biology, Bertha returned from France to Brazil full of plans and ideas but was disappointed with the lack of

# BERTHA

# LUTZ

1894 – 1976



**Bertha Maria Júlia Lutz** was born in the city of São Paulo in 1894 and died in Rio de Janeiro in 1976. She studied biology in 1918 in France. The following year she passed the examination at the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro and became the second woman to be admitted into the federal public service through competitive exam. She completed her undergraduate degree in law in 1933. She ran for deputy in 1933 and in 1934, becoming the first substitute in both contests. She took office in the Chamber of Deputies in July 1936 after the sitting deputy died. She was the first woman to be a member of a Brazilian diplomatic delegation, in 1945, at the conference where the UN Charter was written. She was also a member of the Brazilian delegation to the Conference of the International Year of Women, in Mexico, in 1975. She chose not to get married or have children.

opportunities for women. While she was assisting her father in the Oswaldo Cruz Institute<sup>3</sup>, she declared herself a feminist and wrote for magazines directed at women. She joined with Jerônima Mesquita (whose father was a baron), the lawyer Mirtes Campos (the first woman to practice law in Brazil), the teacher Maria Lacerda de Moura, the engineer Carmen Portinho and the writer Stella Duval and created a League for the Intellectual Emancipation of Women, in Rio de Janeiro. In August 1922, these activists reorganized the group, which went on to call itself the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress (FBPF in Portuguese), a name that has ever since been associated with women's enfranchising in Brazil. In December 1922, the FBPF promoted the First International Feminist Congress at the Automobile Club in Rio de Janeiro. Outstanding political and intellectual figures were invited to speak in favor of women's suffrage. These included the senator Lauro Müller, the writer Júlia Lopes de Almeida, and the pediatrician Arthur Moncorvo Filho. The key speaker

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3 A pioneering center of research in tropical medicine.

of the congress was the North American feminist Carrie Chapman Catt.

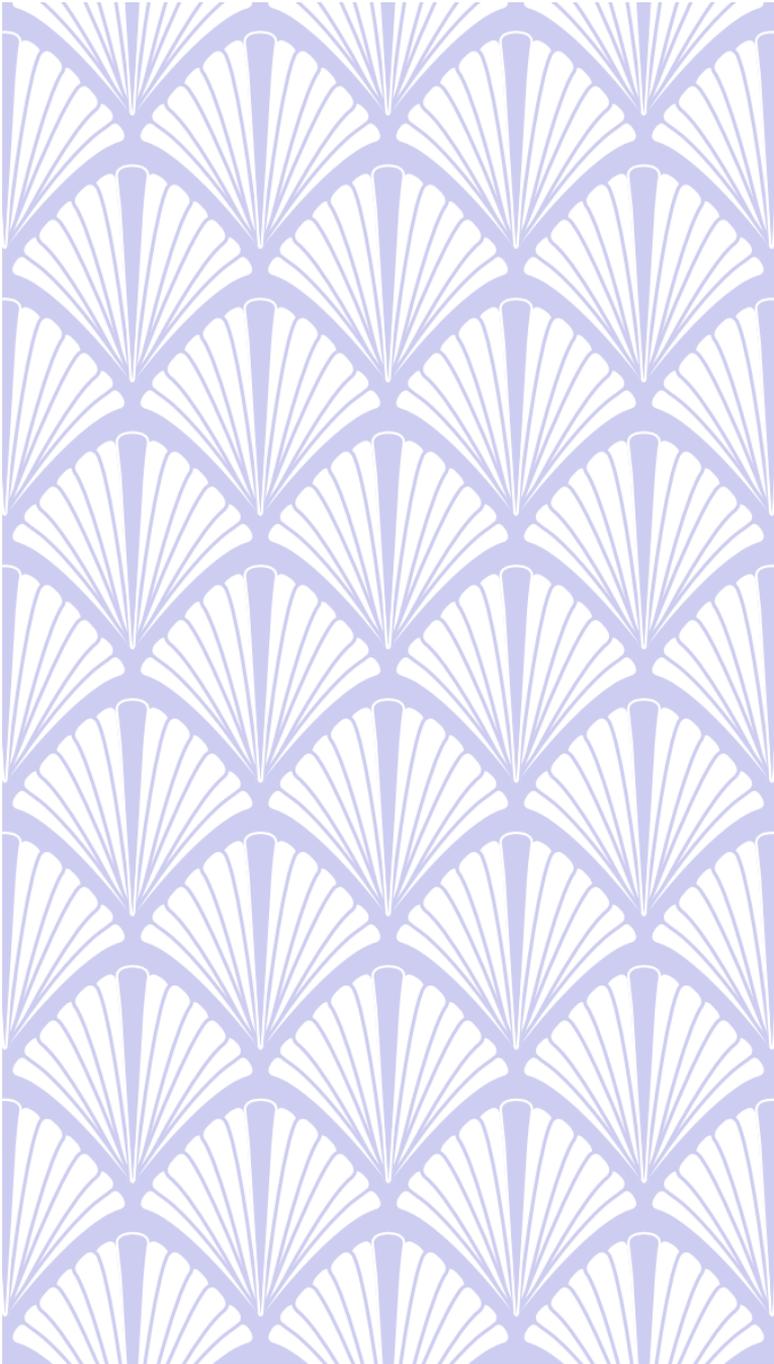


LUTZ AND OTHER WOMEN AT THE 1922 INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST CONGRESS. [Illustration by Fabrizia Posada based on an image in the National Archives]



9

SUFFRAGIST  
**BILLS**



Neither the initiatives of Daltro nor those of the movements of the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress gained women the right to vote, but the issue was not dead. Deputies and senators continued to introduce bills aimed at giving women the right to vote and forcing Congress to take a position on the suffragists' demands. In 1919, two of these bills were introduced in the Senate. In May, senator Alfredo Ellis introduced one, which was rejected in the Justice Committee of the Senate. In December, the senator from Pará, Justo Chermont, introduced a similar bill. In 1921, deputy Nogueira Penido introduced a bill in the Chamber, and, in 1924, deputy Basílio de Magalhães took up the issue.

Senator Justo Chermont's bill went the farthest. In the second half of 1927, his statement was debated again in the Senate. The feminists of the Brazilian

Federation for Women's Progress followed the debate closely, going so far as to attend the session in the Justice Committee. They also sent letters to the senators trying to convince them to vote in favor of the Chermont bill and, not satisfied with this, brought a petition to the Senate with two thousand signatures in December of that year.

The press covered the feminist movement and reproduced the debates between parliamentarians for and against the bill. Even so, the battle was lost.

"In demanding these rights, we do nothing more than what is being done or had been done by women in all civilized countries. It is a universally recognized principle of democratic regimes that those who obey the laws and pay taxes enjoy the right to participate, directly or indirectly, in the elaboration of these very same laws. This is understood and practiced in the most advanced countries, almost all of which recognize the political rights of women."

*(FBPF, 1927, p. 38, our translation)*

## WOMEN VOTERS IN RIO GRANDE DO NORTE

When senator Juvenal Lamartine de Faria, in Rio Grande do Norte, a state in the Northeast of Brazil, resigned his seat in the Senate to run for governor of his state successfully, it became necessary to have elections in April 1928, to choose his replacement.

Governor Faria supported women's right to vote, and the state courts did not object it, and many women flocked to register. Two educators, Celina Guimarães and Júlia Barbosa competed to be the first woman to vote in the state.

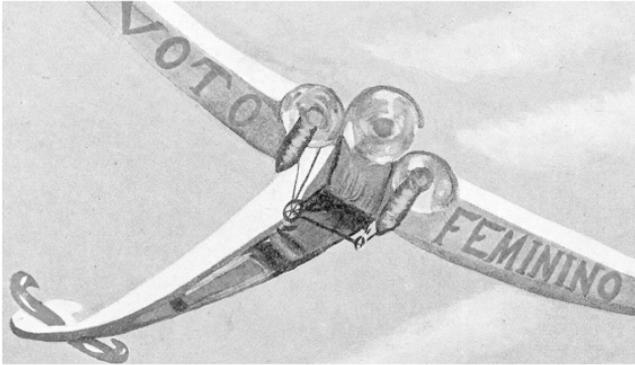


A Primeira eleitora Brasileira, Professora Julia Barbosa no acto de seu alistamento eleitoral em Natal.

JÚLIA BARBOSA REGISTERING TO VOTE IN NATAL (POSTCARD OF THE BRAZILIAN FEDERATION FOR WOMEN'S PROGRESS, NOVEMBER, 1927).  
[Source: Adolpho Gordo Papers/Centro de Memória-Unicamp]

In support of the campaign, the feminists of the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress flew over Natal dropping suffragist leaflets.

However, there were doubts about whether the women's votes in Rio Grande do Norte were valid, and the question returned to the Senate, which decided against the hopes of the country's suffragists. It was hoped that the example of the northeastern state would open the way to voting for all Brazilian women, but it was not the case. This episode showed that the federal republican system in Brazil was not like that in the United States and that strategies inspired by the North American suffragist movement did not work in Brazil. It became clear that, unlike in the United States, the Brazilian federation states did not have the autonomy to define the citizenship criteria. The movement in Rio Grande do Norte was also the last act of a long decade marked by initiatives that forced movers and shakers to take a position on the issue. Still, their decisions were not favorable to the suffragist cause.



POSTCARD: THE WOMEN'S VOTE, FROM THE BRAZILIAN FEDERATION FOR WOMEN'S PROGRESS. [Source: Adolpho Gordo Papers/Centro de Memória-Unicamp]

## GIVE UP? THEY DID NOT EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!

Women could neither vote nor be elected to representative posts, which meant that there was no one to represent them or listen to their demands. The only way out was to continue the campaign, hold meetings, publish magazines, and write books in favor of the right to vote.

An example of a suffragist caught by the uneasy spirit of her generation was the lawyer Diva Nolf Nazário. She went to the voter registration office in her city, Batatais (state of São Paulo), to

register and had her request rejected by the judge. In response, in 1923, she published the book *Voto feminino e feminismo: um ano de feminismo entre nós* (The Vote and The Feminism: A Year of Feminism Among Us). The young woman called for legal equality between men and women.

Following in the footsteps of Diva Nazário, the São Paulo lawyer Adalzira Bittencourt presented her request for registration in February of 1929. Filing for voter registration had become a common way of politically demonstrating in Brazil and all countries with campaigns for women's suffrage. As one would expect, the judge responded with a big no!

"The request has no standing. The word 'cidadão' (citizen) employed in the Art. 70 of the Federal Constitution refers only to male citizens of the male sex. The various attempts that have been made to change our highest law by extending the right to vote to women have shown how the word citizens [masculine in Portuguese] must be taken as written in the cited Art. 70. There was no intention of extending this right to women in our Constituent Assembly, which has been confirmed

overtime. Until recently, almost all jurists have had no doubts about this." (MORAES, 1929, *our translation*)

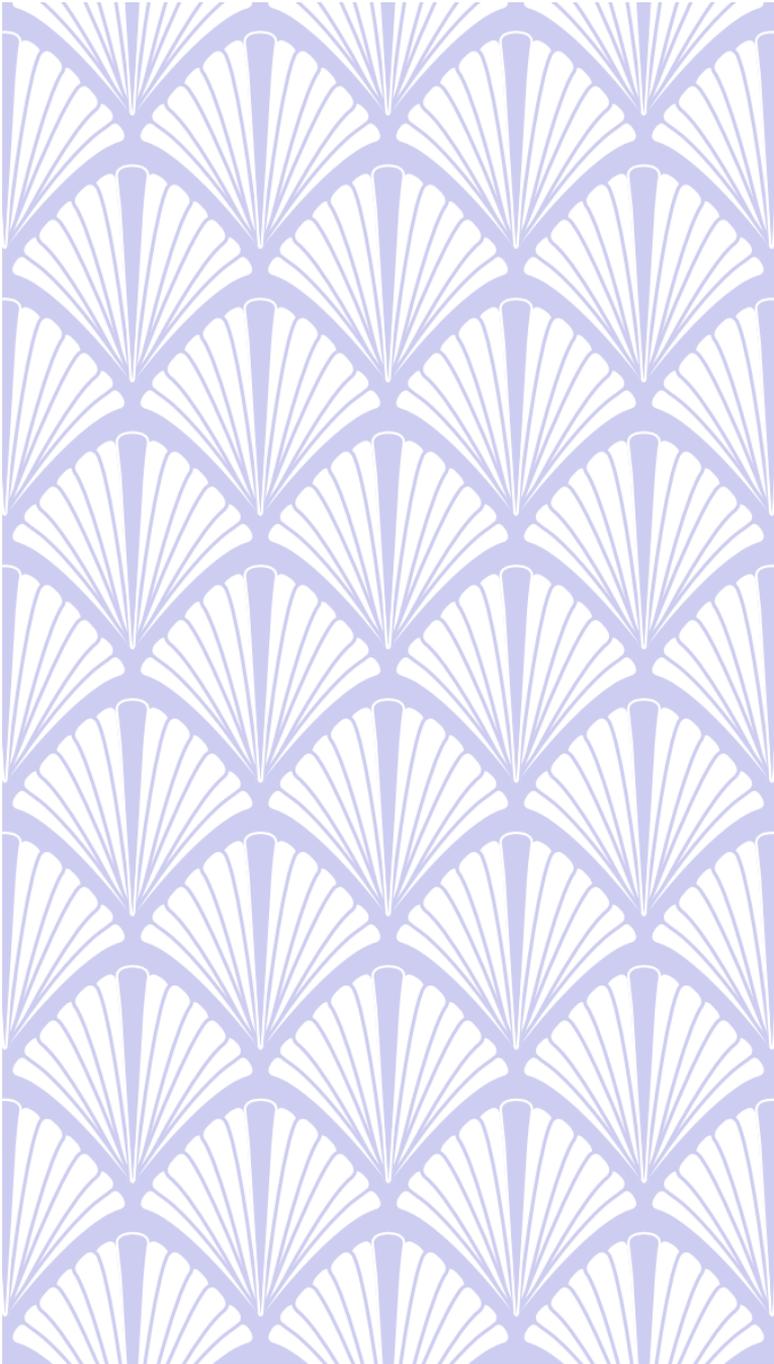


COVER OF THE MAGAZINE FON-FON, FROM 1914. [Source: Collections of the National Library Foundation - Brazil]



10

FINALLY,  
WOMEN  
VOTERS



In October 1930, a group of politicians led by Getúlio Vargas took power by overthrowing the president of the Republic, Washington Luís, in what they called a revolution. From then until November 1945, Vargas ruled the country.

Without a clear understanding of what the new group leading the government intended to do, women remained observers of the political scene. However, when Vargas gave signs that he wanted to reform the voting laws and hold elections for Congress, the feminists in the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress and other women's political groups sought to persuade the president finally to extend the right to vote to Brazilian women.

In June of 1931, Vargas received delegates from the Second International Feminist Congress in the Catete Palace, Rio de Janeiro, and was sympathetic.

The head of the provisional government said the country was ready to accept these ideas, given that they were not contrary to Brazilian family traditions.

Aware that they should be conciliatory, the Feminist Congress avoided difficult issues such as divorce and emphasized in a document delivered to the government the need to grant the right to vote to women.

By then, Vargas had set up a commission of jurists to reform the Brazilian electoral system. At the end of the debates and disagreements within the commission, the vote for women would have still been restricted. Only widows and single women with their own income would have been able to vote. Even if they had their personal income because of professional activity, married women could only vote if authorized by their husbands. The commission thus sought to impose restrictions, which, according to some of its members, were “indispensable for good order in private relations within the Brazilian family” (CABRAL, 2004, p. 21, our translation).

Listening to women’s arguments against these restrictions, Vargas personally revised the commission’s text and the draft of the new Electoral Code. When it was published on February 24th, 1932,

the Code granted women the vote without any special restriction concerning civil status. Women could vote and run for office. In addition, members of religious orders, who had lost the right to vote in the 1891 Constitution, could vote as well. Thus, nuns could vote if they wished. The law also foresaw a new kind of representative, the class representative, who could be chosen by employees and employers.<sup>4</sup>

An election campaign began in the entire country to convince women who had not been part of the suffragist movement to register and vote.

## SEVEN CANDIDATES TO THE CONSTITUENT IN RIO DE JANEIRO

Finally, on May 3rd, 1933, a national vote was held for representatives to the Constituent Assembly. Naturally, Bertha Lutz was a candidate for deputy in the assembly, which met in November 1933. To run, she became a member of the Autonomista (Autonomist) Party, which had recently been founded

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<sup>4</sup> In 1933 election, there were 254 seats in contention. Of these, 17 were elected by employer groups, 18 were elected by unions, 2 by government workers and 3 by members of the liberal professions.

to run in the Federal District and whose members were close to Vargas. The Autonomista was the party where the members of the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress (FBPF in Portuguese) promoted their campaign. Cautiously, they also campaigned using the ticket *Liga Eleitoral Independente* (Independent Electoral League), of which they had full control. The educator Leolinda Daltro ran, as well as Natércia da Silveira, an old ally of Lutz who led the National Alliance of Women. In total, seven women were candidates to the Constituent Assembly, all from the Federal District (then Rio de Janeiro): Leolinda Daltro, Natércia de Silveira, Bertha Lutz, Ilka Labarte, Georgina Azevedo Lima, Tereza Rabelo de Macedo, and Julita Soares de Gama. From all of these, Lutz got the majority of the votes: 16,423. Those votes were not enough to get a seat in the Chamber, but Lutz became the first alternate deputy for the Autonomist Party.

In July of the same year, **Almerinda de Farias Gama**, another FBPF affiliate, as an elected delegate of the Trade Union of Typists and Stenographers of the Federal District, took part in choosing class delegates – representatives of the trade unions, employers and the liberal professions.

# ALMERINDA DE FARIAS GAMA

—  
1899 – 1999



**Almerinda de Farias Gama** was born in Maceió, on May 16th, 1899, and died in São Paulo, on March 31st, 1999. As a widow, she moved to Rio de Janeiro, where she worked as a typist and later as a lawyer. She studied law and took part in the activities of the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress. With Bertha Lutz's support, she organized the Union of Typists and Stenographers of the Federal District, and she went on to chair it. As a labor leader, she took part in the class of deputies' election to the Constituent, held on July 20th, 1933. By the time a new election was set to October 1934, Farias Gama had left the FBPF. She ran for the Chamber of Deputies by a leftist ticket named Congresso Master (TENÓRIO, 2020). Besides having been a suffragist and professional office worker, Farias Gama published poems and songs that she composed on the piano.

The class deputies' election took place on July 20th of that year and involved a separate protocol. First, the unions chose their elector-delegates who would represent their professional category in the class deputies' election. Second, the elector-delegates met on the day set for the final vote to chose the deputies who would sit in the Constituent Assembly.

The class deputies' election provided for employers' and workers' unions was represented in the drafting of the new Charter. This was a political experiment inspired by the corporative conception of citizenship, which influenced an important group within the Vargas government.







ALMERINDA DE FARIAS GAMA VOTING IN 1933. [Source: Fundação Getúlio Vargas - CPDOC]



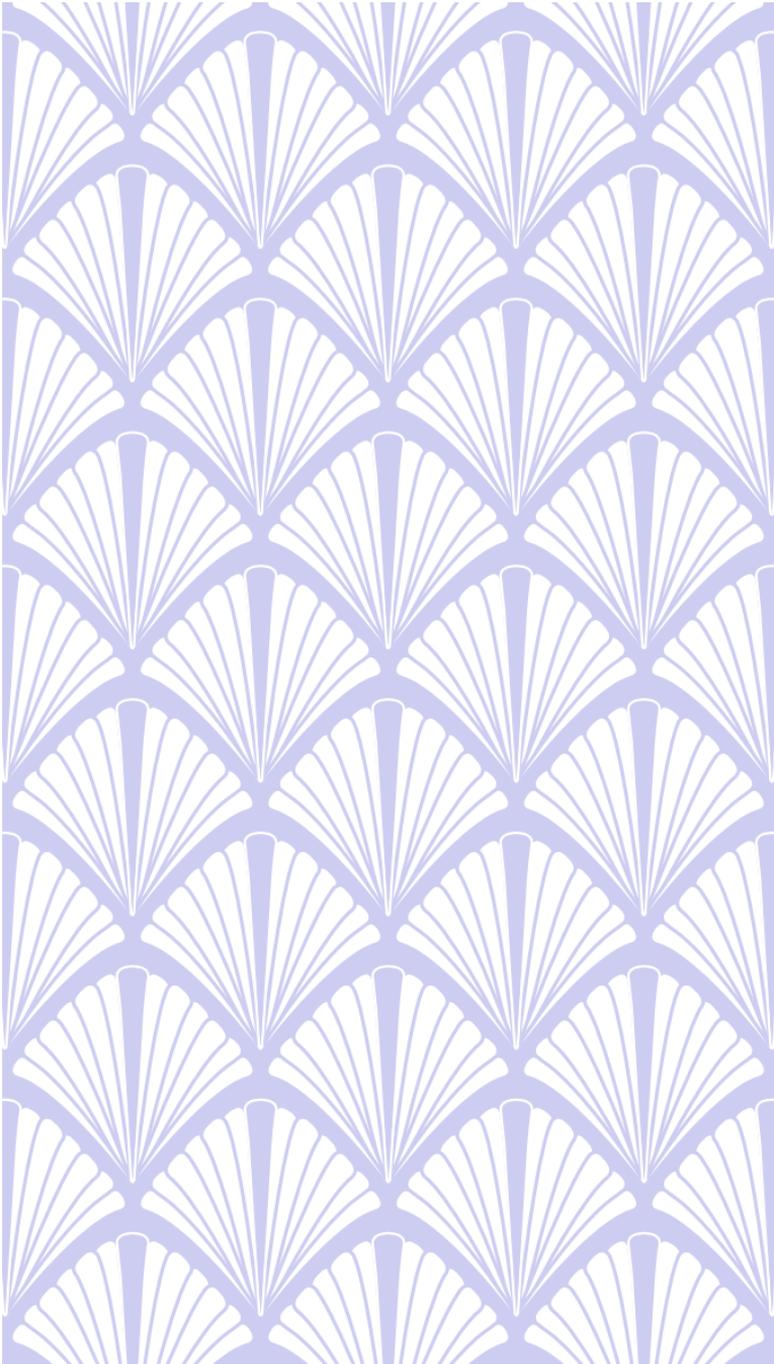
BERTHA AT A MEETING OF CANDIDATES OF THE AUTONOMISTA PARTY IN 1932. [Illustration by Fabrizia Posada based on a picture from Fundação Getúlio Vargas - CPDOC]





11

THE FIRST  
DEPUTY



In São Paulo, the doctor and educator **Carlota Pereira de Queirós** ran for deputy in the Constituent Assembly elections, supported by a large bloc of political forces, including the Catholic Church. She was well known during the armed movement in favor of the “reconstitutionalization” of Brazil, which began on July 9th, 1932. During the conflict, Queirós coordinated the Department for Assistance to the Wounded, which was responsible for the mobilization in favor of São Paulo soldiers wounded at the front. Because of these initiatives, Queirós became very popular. When the election came, Dr. Queirós received the third-highest vote in the state, some 176,000 votes, becoming the first woman to get a seat in the Chamber of Deputies.

Carlota Queirós knew Bertha Lutz for many years, since Queirós had studied medicine in the

# CARLOTA QUEIRÓS

1892 – 1982



**Carlota Pereira Queirós** was born in São Paulo in 1892 and died in 1982. The daughter of a rich landowning family, she studied medicine and undergraduated in 1926, after having worked teaching children for several years. During the movement in favor of a new constitution in 1932, Carlota Queirós became noted for coordinating the support services for São Paulo combatants. It allowed her to win a big vote in São Paulo when she ran for the Constituent Assembly. She became the first woman to occupy a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. During the Assembly, she argued for women taking an oath to the national flag in exchange for the right to vote, a defeated proposal. At the end of the writing of the new Constitution, she was elected a federal deputy again in 1934. In 1946, she ran for the Constituent Assembly for the UDN but was not elected. She continued to work in medicine and became well known as a hematologist. She chose not to marry or have children.

same class with Bertha's brother, Gualther. This proximity, however, did not result in political understanding since, with the Revolution of 1930, Queirós was opposed to Vargas and especially to political intervention in her home state. In public policy, the differences between the two activists soon became clear, because Lutz was in favor of national centralized health policies. In contrast, Queirós favored the autonomy of the states in elaborating and implementing their own policies.

Another serious difference between them was over the conception of citizenship. While Lutz favored unconditional exercise of political rights, deputy Queirós, like other politicians of the era, believed that there should exist a corresponding duty for every right granted. One must remember that, even with the election of Carlota Queirós to the Assembly and the participation of Almerinda de Farias Gama in the elections for class deputies, women's political participation was not guaranteed and there remained an important issue to be debated in the Assembly. Thus, during the assembly work, Queirós demanded that women, who wanted to vote, should take part in a civil ceremony swearing allegiance to the national flag.

Queirós' proposal was presented by the press as if it represented the exchange of the vote for military service, which caused an uproar. Immediately the feminists of the FBPF allied with more liberal members of the Vargas government, such as Minister Oswaldo Aranha, to remove the amendment proposed by Queirós.

As a deputy, Queirós also suggested that women should provide social services in assistance to the poor, in exchange for the right to vote. The São Paulo parliamentary caucus even proposed an amendment that would give the vote only to those who had shown they have passed through high school, something that would have contributed even more to making the vote an elite affair. The amendment was defeated by a maneuver on a bloc elected by the Church and deputies linked to the military.

Such an association between activities in support of society, through military or social service, and the right to vote had a long history in debates over citizenship. We have already seen that during the work of the Constituent Assembly in 1891, there were parliamentarians who took hold of the idea of the citizen-soldier to justify the exclusion of women from political rights. In the same way, we could consider many of the initiatives of

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professor Leolinda Daltro as responses to those who opposed women being active citizens.

At the beginning of the 30s, Lutz and many others feared that the country was headed in the direction of militarization. Because of this, she rejected the proposal for conditional political rights. Lutz constantly shared her concerns about the subject with her friend Carrie Chapman Catt in monthly letters.

Despite the fact proposals involving a certain degree of militarization were rejected, the chance that women would be dedicated to social assistance did not disappear from the political agenda in those years. However, while Lutz called for the implementation of social policies that would not be linked to charity or religion, Carlota called for private assistance, be it religious or lay, to continue with government resources.

The proposal for conditional political rights generated a great deal of controversy in the Constituent Assembly and the press during the months from April to May of 1934. However, when brought to a vote on May 20th, it was rejected by most of the deputies present.

**“Art. 108.** Brazilians of either sex, older than 18 years and who register according to the law, are voters.

Paragraph 1. Those who cannot be registered to vote:

- a) Those who do not know how to read or write;
- b) Privates, except for sergeants, in the Army or Navy and in the Army’s auxiliary forces, as well as students in the upper-level military schools and candidates for the officer;
- c) Beggars;
- d) Those who are, temporarily or upon definitive judgment, deprived of political rights.

**Art. 109.** Enlistment and voting are mandatory for men and women who are in the paid public service, under sanctions, and saved the exceptions determined by law.” (BRASIL, 1934, *our translation*)

In July 1934, the Constituent Congress was closed and turned into regular Congress. In October the same year, there were new elections, this time for the federal and state legislatures. Carlota Queirós was elected again to the Chamber of Deputies. In her second term, the deputy joined the Public

Health Committee, taking over the task of reformulating the Ministry of Education and Health. Bertha Lutz, again elected a substitute deputy for the Autonomist Party, took office in the Chamber of Deputies in July 1936 after the death of the initially elected member. She thus became the second female deputy in Brazil.

It could be argued that such an effort to get voting had been useless, since women could only vote on three occasions, in May and July 1933, and in October 1934, before the country slowly sank into authoritarianism, and political rights lost their utility. Even then, these were interesting years as ten women state deputies, and many councilwomen were elected, and between July 1936 and November 1937, the Chamber of Deputies had two women in office. Carlota Queirós and Bertha Lutz offered another point of view to the parliamentary debates and had the chance to present projects and amendments in important discussions.

With the fall of Vargas in 1945, the country returned to democracy and wrote a new Constitution. The 1946 Charter did not retreat on women's right to vote and made the vote obligatory for them, provided they were educated.

**“Art. 133. Registration and vote are obligatory for Brazilians of both sexes, except for cases listed by law.”** (*BRASIL, 1946, our translation*)

It is important to remark that the demand for literacy excluded a large portion of the Brazilian population in the 1940s. Statistics on literacy for this period are difficult to come by and not always reliable. In 1940, 49.74% of the white male population and 41.02% of the white female population could read and write. Only 21.05% of the black male population was literate, versus 14.51% of black females<sup>5</sup>. Statistics regarding the indigenous population are even less reliable than the rest of the population. The first census to include race with a consistent methodology occurred in 1950. For all these reasons we lack information in the labor market in the first three decades of the 20th century, which were crucial years. For these reasons too, we should respectfully refer to the enfranchisement of some Brazilian women, instead of referring to the enfranchisement of all the female adult population.

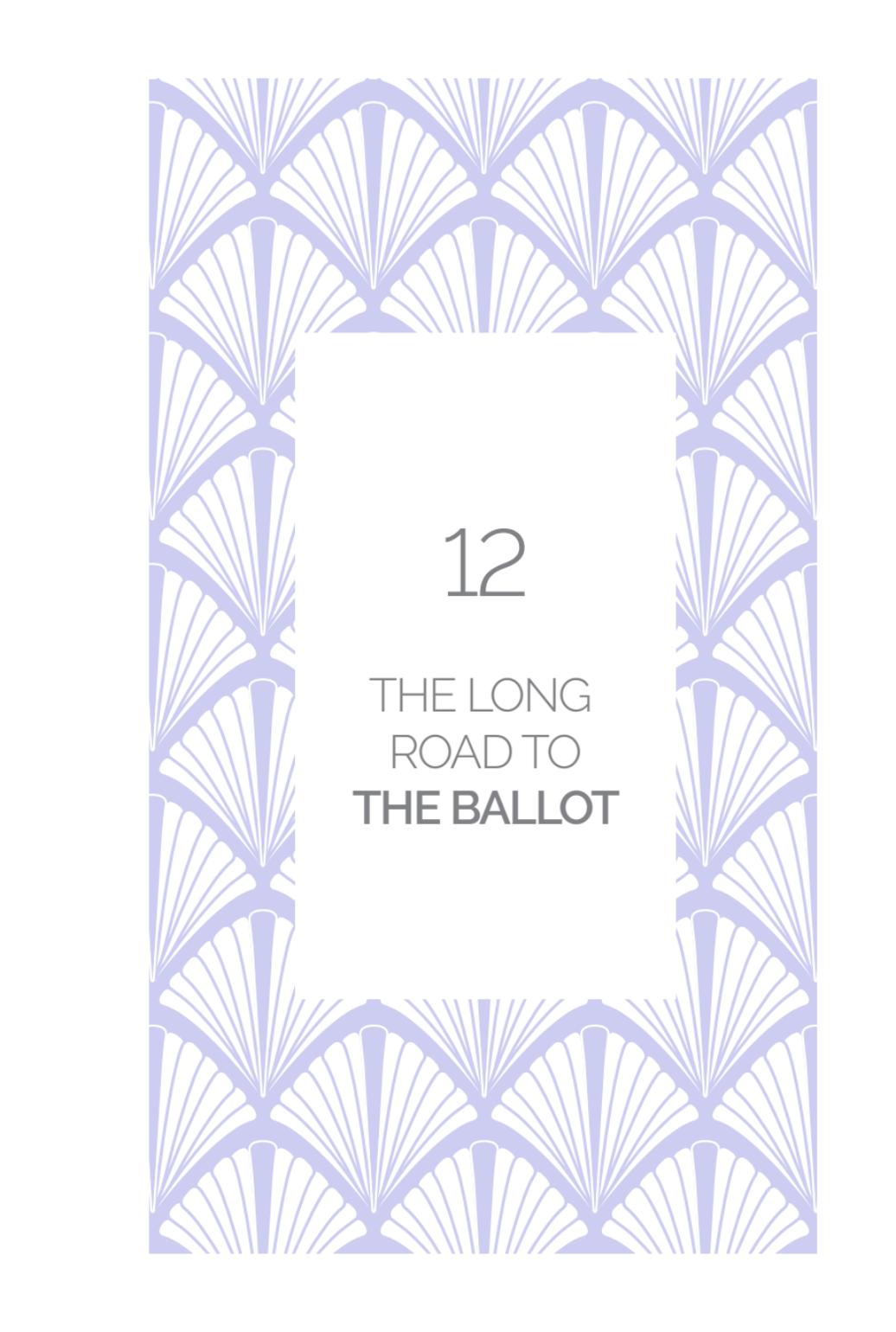
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5 BELTRÃO & NOVELLINO, 2002, tab. 2.

Once integrated into party life, women fought for seats in the federal, state, and municipal assemblies. Ivete Vargas, the niece of Getúlio Vargas, was especially well known, serving as a deputy for the PTB<sup>6</sup> from October 1950 until December 1968, when her political rights were suspended by the Institutional Act no. 5., one of the harshest measures taken by the military-civil government against the legislature in those years.

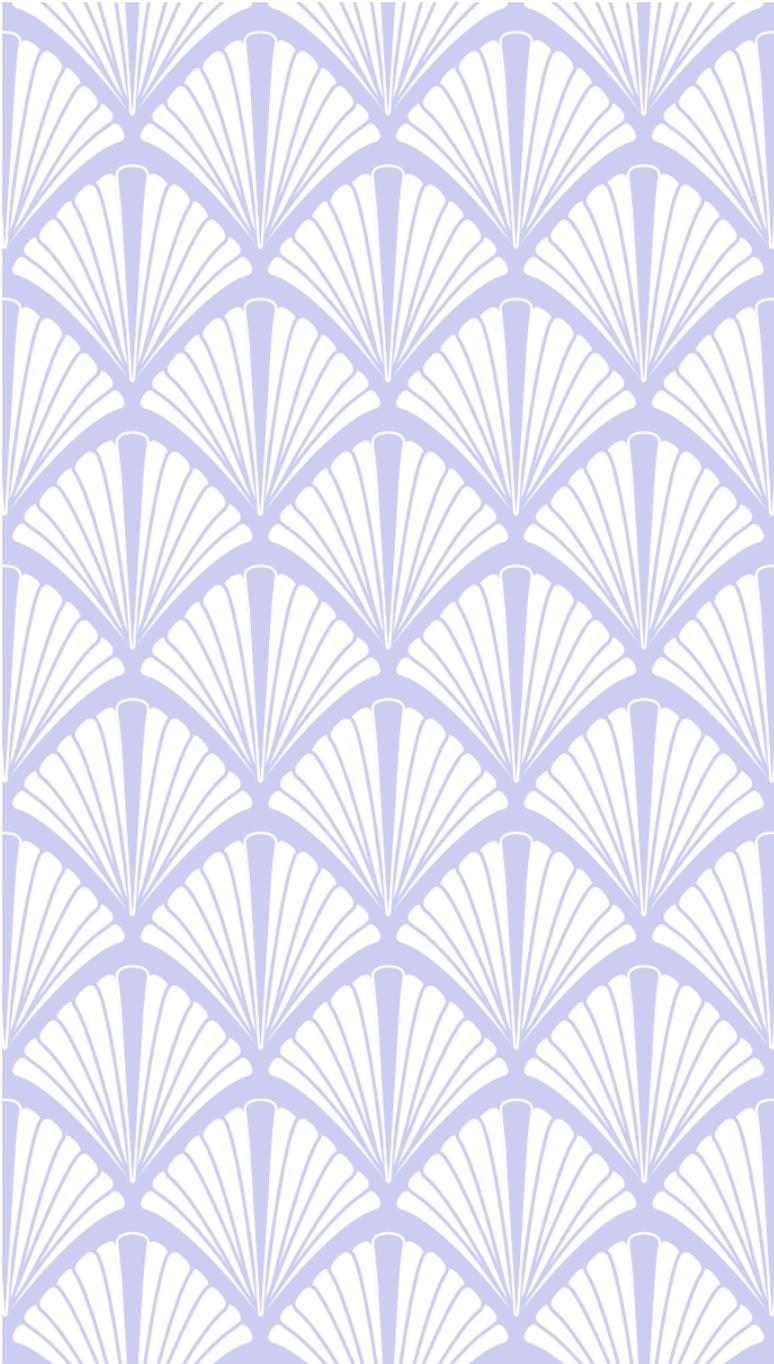
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6 The Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (Brazilian Labor Party) was a party created in May 1945 by groups from the Vargas government, with a goal to defend workers' legal rights. The PTB was an electoral force of great importance, especially in the cities, during the democratic period from 1946 to April 1964. At that point the country descended into a new authoritarian cycle that lasted until 1988.



12

THE LONG  
ROAD TO  
**THE BALLOT**



Scholars are unanimous in agreeing that the vote is not synonymous with democracy, although it is a prerequisite for a truly democratic political system. As seen above, the expansion of the vote was a banner raised in the 19th century, in opposition to those who favored restricted and elitist political participation.

Presently, most countries have adopted universal suffrage, in which the votes of voters who are educated and uneducated have the same weight, independent of sex or civil status. Nevertheless, this is not the final and inevitable stage of the evolution of democratic political systems. In the past, nothing guaranteed that elective systems would line up in this way. All the measures in favor of the democratization of these political systems were won after difficult struggles.

The restrictions on women's right to vote were many. In some places, they were prevented from voting at any level, be it in the context of municipal or nationwide. Often they were prevented from running for elective office, especially to the legislative or executive branches, until recently. The history of the struggles for women's right to vote also registers restrictions on religious and racial grounds. Commonly, the granting of the right to vote reached only single women before married women were admitted to the voters' rank. Less well known are restrictions that occurred, and still occur, in voter registration procedures, such as exaggerated requirements for proof of income, education, and employment. These measures make the lives of both male and female voters difficult, and to dismantle these barriers, one by one, required many political activists' effort over generations. On the internet, one can find many timelines for women's suffrage throughout the world, usually beginning with granting the vote in New Zealand, in September of 1893. However, even this date can be disputed since women in New Zealand, which was a British dominion, did not take part in national elections until 1919. This example explains why there is so much confusion over the hundreds of attempts

to work out timelines for the women's vote in the world.

These warnings are a guide to the reader who consults the timeline that follows. The data should be taken as moments of change in political systems when possibilities were opened up for women to participate in the process of choosing political representatives. One must remember, they do not mark the end of the process of political negotiation, and indeed, in most cases, they define a step in the direction of the democratization of the electoral voting systems.

## TIMELINE

WORLD

**1791:** September, in Paris, Olympe de Gouges published the *Declaration of the rights of women and the citizen*, in which she called for education and the right to vote for women.

WORLD

**1792:** English writer Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*.

BRAZIL

**1831:** On July 28th, deputies José Bonifácio de Andrada and Manuel Alves Branco introduced a bill in the General Assembly for a reformulation of the electoral system. In it, they foresaw the possibility of women voting in local elections.

BRAZIL

**1832:** The educator Nísia Floresta published a polemic book in favor of women's education. Some experts say that the work is a free translation of the 1792 Wollstonecraft's work. But others argue that Floresta translated the work of a different English author.

BRAZIL

**1868:** Deputy and writer José de Alencar published *The representative system*, in which he spoke in favor of women voting.

BRAZIL

**1879:** In April, deputies spoke in favor of the vote for women and non-Catholics.

BRAZIL

**1887:** The dentist Isabel de Sousa Mattos registered herself as a voter in the São José do Norte district, in the province of Rio Grande do Sul. She remained faithful to the suffragist cause for her entire life and was a petitioner for the Women's Republican Party in December of 1916.

BRAZIL

**1888:** In December, the suffragist journal *A Família* (the Family), edited by Josefina Álvares de Azevedo, began to circulate. The initiative joined other journals edited by women all over the country that, for some time, advocated for education, the end of slavery, and the right to vote.

Note: The writings made by women are old. The oldest journal on record comes from the 1830s. From the 1870s on, the most discussed subjects were education, abolitionism, and suffragism. Azevedo continued the movement, emphasizing education and suffrage.

BRAZIL

**1891:** In January (more specifically on the 12th, 22nd, and 27th), political rights were discussed and voted in the Constituent Assembly. The amendments in favor of the vote for women were rejected.

WORLD

**1893:** On September 19th, the governor of New Zealand, then a British Colony, signed a new voting law, which aimed at giving the vote to women.

WORLD

**1906:** In Finland, women could vote beginning in July.

BRAZIL

**1910:** On December 17th, the Women's Republican Party, chaired by educator Leolinda de Figueiredo Daltro, was registered.

BRAZIL

**1916:** On August 12th, educator Mariana de Noronha Horta of Belo Horizonte petitioned the Chamber of Deputies to give women the right to vote.

BRAZIL

**1916:** On December 22nd, educator Leolinda de Figueiredo Daltro headed a petition of the Women's Republican Party, which asked for the right to vote.

WORLD

**1917:** In March, the Russian Congress, called the Duma, ceded to pressure from suffragist groups and extended the right to vote to women in Russia. After the socialist revolution of November that year, many policies favorable to women, such as policies to support maternity, were adopted. Also, a woman was named a government minister for the first time, Aleksandra Kollantai.

BRAZIL

**1917:** In July, deputy Maurício de Lacerda introduced a bill to give women the vote.

WORLD

**1917:** In Canada, women who were parents of soldiers in the war could vote in national elections. The next year, the measure was extended to other women over the age of 21, except the indigenous who only got the vote in 1950. Starting in 1920, women voters also could present themselves as candidates.

WORLD

**1918:** In Britain, women over the age of 30 could vote as of February. In July of 1928, the minimum age for the registration of women was lowered to 21 years.

WORLD

**1919:** The House of Representatives in the United States approved the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women the right to vote. During the following months, the states of the union ratified the amendment, and on August 26th, 1920, the measure became law.

BRAZIL

**1919:** In May, senator Alfredo Ellis (state Senate of São Paulo) introduced a bill for the women's vote.

WORLD

**1919:** In Holland, women could start to vote in August.

BRAZIL

**1919:** In December, senator Justo Chermont (representing the state of Pará in the Federal Senate) introduced a bill for acceptance of the vote for women.

BRAZIL

**1921:** Deputy Nogueira Penido (state of Rio de Janeiro) introduced a bill for women's suffrage.

WORLD

**1922:** In Mexico, a movement lead by educator Elvia Carrillo won the vote for women in the state of Yucatan. The participation of Mexican women in national elections was only approved in October 1953.

BRAZIL

**1922:** In August, the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress, inspired by feminists and chaired by Bertha Lutz, was registered.

BRAZIL

**1922:** In October, the National Legal Congress was held, in which the lawyer Mirtes Campos defended the constitutionality of the women's vote.

BRAZIL

**1922:** In December, the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress held the first international feminist congress in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro.

BRAZIL

**1923:** The São Paulo lawyer Diva Nolf Nazário published a book in which she defended the right to vote.

BRAZIL

**1924:** Deputy Basílio de Magalhães (state of Minas Gerais) presented a bill in favor of the vote for women.

**1924:** In Ecuador, the Council of State held that the women's vote was constitutional. Doctor Matilde Hidalgo Procel presented herself to vote for elections to Congress. In 1928, a Constituent Congress approved a text which established the political rights of men and women over the age of 21 who were literate. In 1970, after a long debate, it approved the vote for illiterates.

**1927:** In December, the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress delivered a petition to the Senate's Secretariat. The document asked senators for the right to vote.

**1927:** In Uruguay, on July 3rd, a plebiscite was held in Cerro Chato, and this was the first time that women voted in the country. Uruguayan voters could take part in a national election for the first time in 1938.

**1928:** In April, there were elections for the Senate in Rio Grande do Norte. Women in the state voted for the first time, thanks to a decision by the state courts. The ballots of these voters would end up being annulled.

WORLD

**1930:** In South Africa, white women were able to vote from May. In March of 1984, women of mixed race or from Indian were given the vote. Only in 1994 would black women get the right to vote.

WORLD

**1931:** In Portugal, women could vote at the local level starting that year and, starting in 1934, on the national level. Starting in June 1976, they could run for office.

WORLD

**1931:** In Spain, women voted from December.

BRAZIL

**1932:** On February 24th, the Provisional Government published Decree no. 21,076 (the Electoral Code). In it, literate women above the age of 21 could register without restrictions based on civil status. The decree also instituted the Electoral Court.

BRAZIL

**1932:** On July 9th, the São Paulo armed movement began, the Constitutionalist Revolution, which opposed the government of Getúlio Vargas.

**1932:** In Uruguay, the National Congress approved a law that permitted women to vote and run for office at the national level. Only at the general elections of 1938 were Uruguayan women voters able to exercise their political rights.

**1933:** On May 3rd, there were elections throughout the country, and for the first time in Brazil, women could vote and run for candidates to the National Constituent Assembly.

**1933:** On November 15th, the Constituent Assembly met, and Carlota Pereira de Queirós was sworn in as the first woman deputy in Brazil.

**1934:** In Chile, women could vote in municipal elections in January. On January 8th, 1949, after passage by Congress, the president of the republic signed the law that granted the right to vote in national elections for literate women over the age of 21.

BRAZIL

**1934:** On May 20th, the clause on political rights is brought to a vote in the plenary session. After a heated discussion, the Constituents approved the equality of political rights for men and women over the age of 18 and literate. The Constitutional text, promulgated on July 16th, crowned decades of political mobilization in favor of women's suffrage in Brazil.

BRAZIL

**1934:** The Constitution promulgated on July 16th, sanctioned the the women's right to vote without restrictions based on civil status. The vote was optional for women, except for public employees, for whom it was obligatory.

BRAZIL

**1934:** On October 14th, elections were held for the Chamber of Deputies and the state legislative assemblies. Ten women were elected state deputies.

BRAZIL

**1936:** On July 28th, Bertha Lutz took office as a federal deputy.

BRAZIL

**1937:** On November 10th, President Getúlio Vargas decreed the *Estado Novo* (New State) and closed the legislature.

WORLD

**1939:** In El Salvador, the dictator Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez promoted a constitutional reform that extended the right to vote in part to women if they met the requirements concerning civil status, education, and age. Starting in 1961, women could run for office.

WORLD

**1940:** In Cuba, a constitutional reform established the equality of political rights between men and women.

WORLD

**1942:** In the Dominican Republic, women got the vote.

WORLD

**1944:** In France, while Nazis still occupied most of the country, General De Gaulle signed a decree on April 21st, granting women the right to vote and run for office. The following year, liberated France had its first elections in which women could take part.

WORLD

**1944:** In Guatemala, women could vote if they proved they were literate. In 1965, illiterate women also gained the right to vote.

WORLD

**1945:** In Bolivia, a Constituent Assembly granted women the right to vote in municipal elections. In July 1952, following a revolutionary political uprising, universal suffrage was granted, and men and women over the age of 21, without any restrictions based on educational background, could vote.

WORLD

**1945:** In Japan, women were able to vote and run for office starting in December.

BRAZIL

**1946:** The Constitution promulgated on September 18th made the vote obligatory for men and women in Brazil, provided they could demonstrate literacy.

WORLD

**1947:** In Argentina, starting in September, women were given the right to take part in national elections. In 1927, a local regulation allowed women to vote and run for office in the province of San Juan. However, the presidency of the Republic intervened in the province and revoked the regulation.

**1948:** In April, the Inter-American Convention on Granting Political Rights to Women is approved at the 9th International American Conference held in Bogota, Colombia. The signatory countries committed themselves to extend the right to vote to their female citizens if they had not already done so. The Bogota Convention gave a new push to expanding women's right to vote in Latin America.

**1952:** Starting in January in Greece, women could vote.

**1952:** In Lebanon, women could vote.

**1954:** In Colombia, starting in August, women could vote if they showed they were literate.

**1955:** In Peru, women voted from September.

**1956:** In Honduras, women could vote.

**1956:** In Egypt, women could vote.

WORLD

**1961:** In Paraguay, women could vote from July.

WORLD

**1971:** In Switzerland, women got the right to vote and run for office in February.

BRAZIL

**1976:** On May 31st, Eunice Michilles became the first women senator when she substituted for the late senator João Bosco.

WORLD

**1979:** In Nigeria, a constitutional reform adopted universal suffrage. Starting from then, women in the north of the country could vote, joining women in the south who already could vote.

BRAZIL

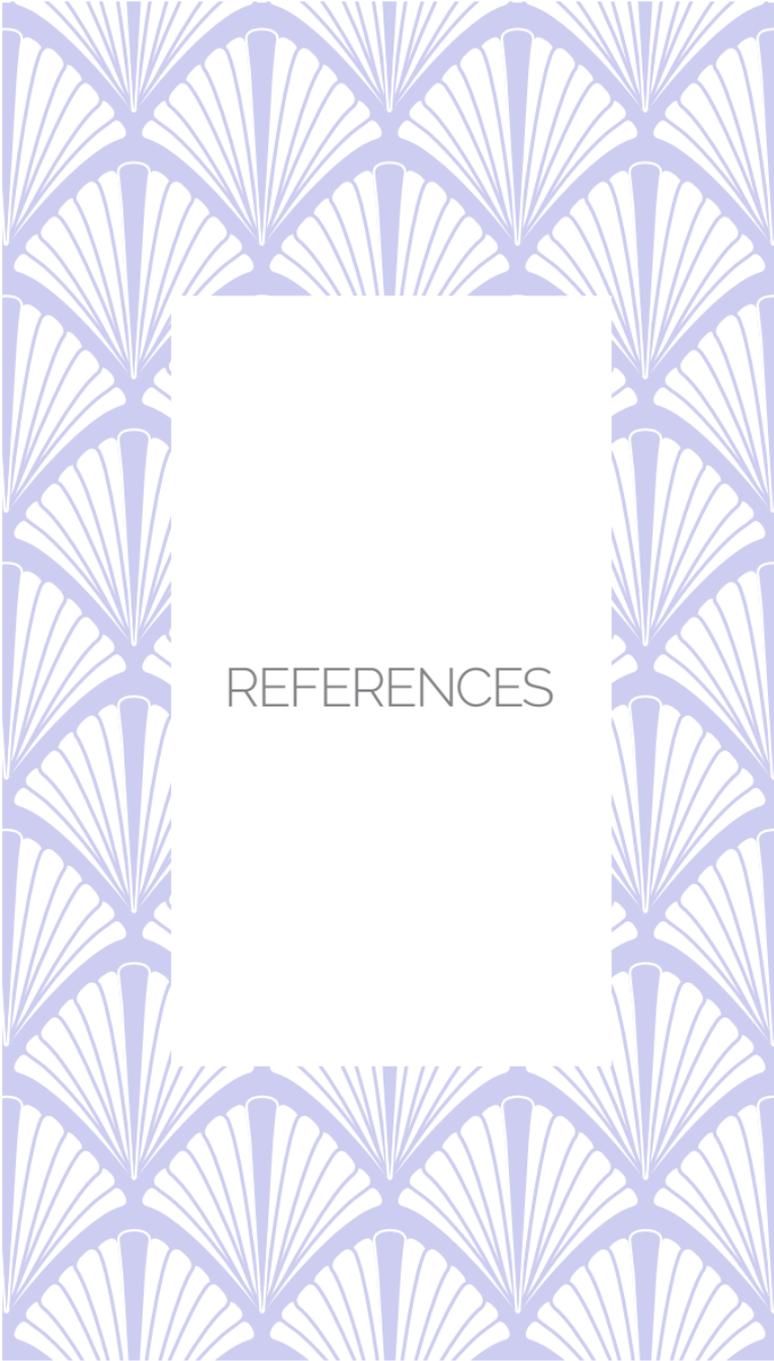
**1988:** The Constitution promulgated on October 5th extended the right to vote to illiterate men and women, who could register to vote if they desired.

WORLD

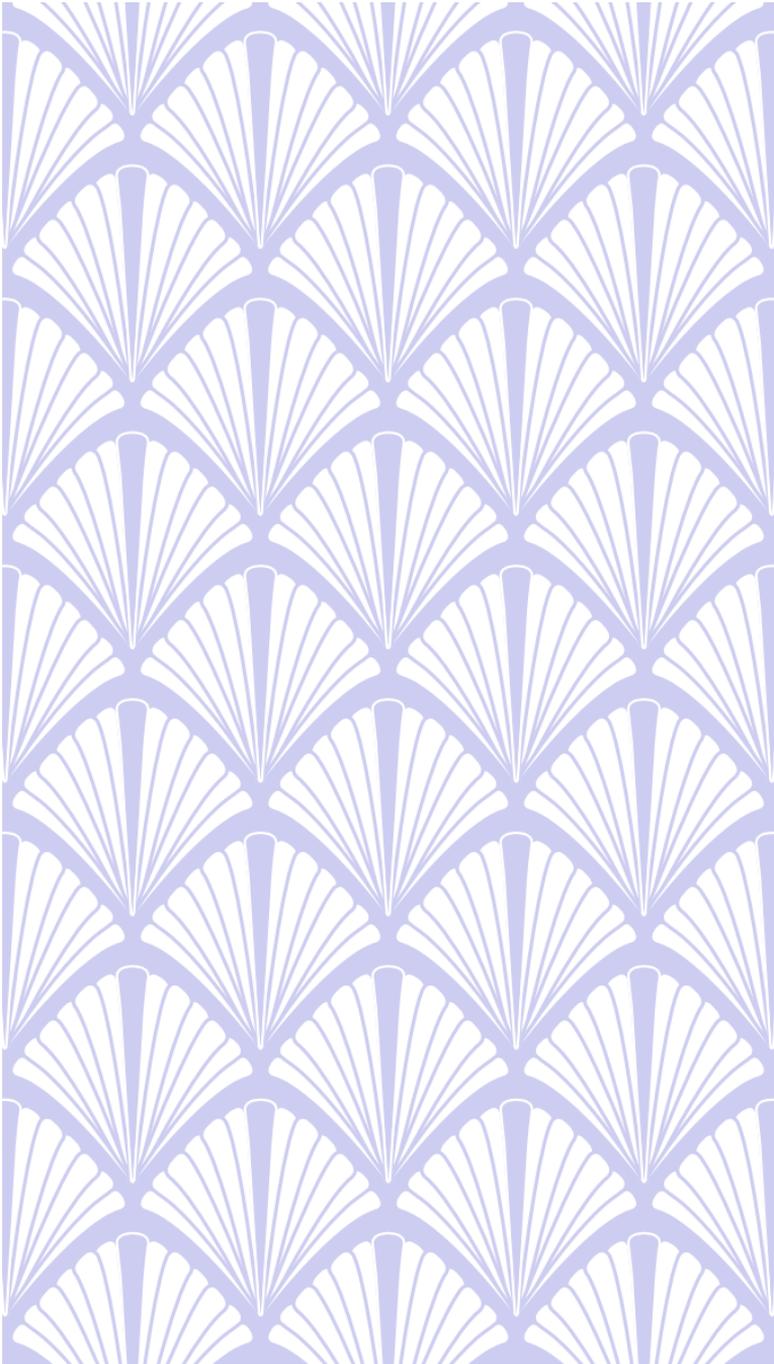
**2006:** In the United Arab Emirates, women got the right to vote.

WORLD

**2015:** In Saudi Arabia, women took part in elections for the first time, although only in municipal ones.



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This book exposes the history of the struggle for women's political rights in Brazil, revisiting the fundamental moments in which the Legislative Branch debated the ideas of admitting women into political life.

The equal inclusion of women in Parliament and other decision-making circles in the country is an important step towards overcoming the so-called "crisis of representativeness" in politics. Only with full representation will the Brazilian people be able to exercise their citizenship.

The analysis of this determinant process for Brazilian democracy is essential for reflecting on political and social inequality, which is still symptomatic in our days.

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