“The movement for woman suffrage may have been a national one, but the best measure of what women were able to do with those hard-won ballots is not the enactment of federal legislation or the election of women to office. Instead, we should measure the weight of their votes where they did – in their own communities and state legislatures.” – Lorraine Gates Schuyler, The Weight of Their Votes, 2006.

March to the 19th Phase II
Protecting the Legacy: African American Women, Politics, and The Vote Before 1930

Task Force Report
www.protect.chickhistory.org

September 20, 2017
Background

America’s cultural heritage is preserved not only in libraries, museums, archives, and other community organizations, but also in all of our homes, family histories, and life stories. A critical issue facing women’s history writ-large is that a majority of objects and material are still in private and family collections. Without this history, we’ll never have the full picture of what happened.

In 2020, the United States will mark the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment. Tennessee was the final state that ratified the constitutional amendment enfranchising women with the vote. Yet, nearly a century later, so many experiences, voices and stories from that movement remain uncovered — particularly those of black women.

Working with diverse communities, Phase II of *March to the 19th* is dedicated to uncovering and preserving stories related to suffrage and voting history in Tennessee. In an effort to expand the narrative of suffrage in the state, the project will seek out local, lesser-known stories with a primary focus on African American women’s histories.

**Protecting the Legacy** is the second phase of *March to the 19th*, a five-year project organized by the Nashville-based women’s history nonprofit, Chick History, in partnership with Humanities Tennessee. *March to the 19th* is a multi-stage initiative dedicated to commemorating the upcoming centennial of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 2020.

Task Force and Focus Group

In October 2016, a statewide Task Force was assembled to inform the work of Phase II and recommend a subject-matter scope and collection methodology. Work began in November 2016 and ended in August 2017. Members of the Task Force represented subject-matter and technical experts across Tennessee, and included:

- Dr. Noelle Trent, National Civil Rights Museum – Chair
- Andrea Blackman, Nashville Public Library
- Genny Carter, Tennessee State Library & Archives
- Dr. Earnestine Jenkins, University of Memphis
- Renee Kesler, Beck Cultural Exchange Center
- Dr. Susan Knowles, Center for Historic Preservation, Middle Tennessee State University
- Rebecca Price, Chick History
- Dr. Learotha Williams, Tennessee State University
The Task Force had four goals:

1. Establish the scope of material, including the subject-matter, time-frame, type of material, as well as what will not be collected. A discussion on the holes in the archives and what stories are not told will be key. The intent of Phase II of March to the 19th is to seek out local and family history that fills a void in the archives. Goal One will be to establish the exact scope of that void from an archival point of view, including establishing how much material to collect is appropriate.

2. Establish the parameters and options for donating the digital material in relation to copyright. The project will want to respect the copyright of personal family material. We want to make sure we establish trust with donors, and respect family history.

3. Recommend a committee structure, by region, that will help promote, mobilize, and support the project in each region of Tennessee. The structure will include recommended roles for members. The Task Force may also nominate individuals for the committee.

4. Recommend a structure for the Digitization Days, including possible venues in each region, a prototype process for digitization, and other appropriate events/activities/programs throughout the day for the public.

In July 2017, a Focus Group event was held at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. This event served as training for the local committee, outreach into the community, and a preliminary call for material.

Findings from this Focus Group and the Task Force meetings were used in the final recommendations presented in this report.

Findings and Recommendations

**GOAL ONE: SUBJECT-MATTER SCOPE AND MATERIAL**

The task force identified the following considerations:

- The challenge to documenting this activity through material cultural will be to define what we consider history and what work do we value.
- If the project focuses only on the year 1920, or the theme of “first voters” we will miss other stories and information documenting how African American women were politically active before they got the vote.
- The subject-matter scope and collection methodology should reflect the many ways African American women have been politically active.
- A broad, yet well-defined statement of subject-matter scope and material will be important for the communities with which the project will work.
- If the subject-matter scope is too narrow in focus the project will not have many participants or collected items.
• Tennessee has distinct regions, which have their own unique history, and historical context will vary across the state.
• Once the work goes to committees to carry out, members can provide the regional historical context based on the recommend framework.

The Task Force recommends the following framework for subject-matter scope:

The Political Activity of African American Women in Tennessee History, as identified by individual committees, as documented through:

• Local and regional stories of political activity prior to 1930 in the following spheres:
  – Educational institutions, public schools, colleges, and universities
  – Women’s Clubs
  – Political leagues
  – Churches
• Local and regional stories of African American women working toward local, state, or federal suffrage.
• Local and regional stories of African American women voters from 1919-1930.
• Patterns of both voter suppression and integration of African American women from 1919-1930 across Tennessee.

The Task Force recommends the following framework for scope of material and items:

• Church records
• Club records
• Educational institution, public school, and college/university records
• Photographs
• Oral Histories
• Scrapbooks
• Newspaper articles
• Diaries and journals
• Letters
• With the following exceptions:
  1. The call will be for original material, unless the original no longer exists.
  2. For material that falls out of the scope or date range, items can be considered on a case-by-case basis for their historical significance.

NOTE: Due to the rarity of material culture and the nature of the work, if the first call for items during the focus group event and the Memphis Public event
does not yield a lot of material, the subject-matter scope and collection methodology could be revisited.

GOAL TWO: COPYRIGHT

The Task Force identified the following considerations:

- The project and process will respect the family and the family memories that are being shared, and a participant will not be pressed if they are uncomfortable.
- It will be important to educate donors at the event about copyright and their rights.

The Task Force made the following recommendations:

- Information explaining copyright and donor’s rights will be made available for all participants to take home.

GOAL THREE: LOCAL COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The members of the Local Committees will be instrumental to the success of the Digitization Days in each area. Ideally, the full committee will have a combination of: 1) knowledge of the community histories; 2) strong relationships with the audience we are serving; and 3) technical and professional skills for outreach and digitization (such as oral histories and/or archival work). Committee Members are responsible for organizing the role they take, and may be called on to recruit additional volunteers in their area. For each area, the following committee positions are recommended, but not limited to:

- Project Director
- Humanities Scholar
- Museum/Event Space Coordinator
- Archivist
- Oral History
- PR/Outreach

Additional committee members can be added as necessary, and one person may serve multiple roles.

Community Advisors

A Community Advisors group is also recommended. These will be members of the community, museums, historians, and other local organizations that can provide support and outreach to help promote the project to their members and groups.
Community Advisors distribute material (including electronic) and can provide recommendations for participants and further research.

**GOAL FOUR: STRUCTURE FOR DIGITIZATION DAY**

Locations for the Digitization Days should be sites with a historical connection to the subject matter, such as public libraries and/or African American sites and museums. Locations for the Digitization Day should also be accessible to the public, including parking, without any admission costs to participate in the event. If the event is held at a location with admission fees, those fees should be waived for the event. The venue and the committee can make further appropriate arrangements for any additional fees to enter exhibits or programs for those who participate in the Digitization Day. Adequate volunteers and security may be necessary to direct participants to the location of the event. Venues can also consider if discounted tickets or museum store discounts are appropriate.

The following types of programming are recommended as optional, supplemental activities for participants, and should be developed according to the region and venue:

- Genealogical workshop
- Film screening
- Museum or event tours
- Oral history
- Lecture
- Participant Storytelling Panels

The Task Force recommends that the Committees use local partners where possible to help develop and conduct these events.

**ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Task Force made the following additional recommendations:

**Promotion and Outreach**
Building a local network is highly recommended. At least one town-hall meeting should be had in each area with the community to explain the project and give a presentation. Committee members and Community Advisors should help invite and facilitate these meetings.

**Historical Research**
The Humanities Scholar and Project Director should work together to conduct historical research in each area that will aid in the PR and promotion of the event.
In addition to what participants will bring in on their own, each event should have a historical list of people, places, and events as starting points.

**Project Value Statement**

**Welcoming and inclusive**
The project will be respectful to the audience it serves and the personal history we are collecting. The project will make every effort to use language and procedures that are appropriate and sensitive.

**Respect for family history**
The project will be respectful to the personal history we are collecting. Following professional best practices and standards, opportunities to withdraw material or oral histories will not be available. However, in extreme cases, consideration will be given and the Project Leaders will discuss and determine the best course of action.

**Core Values**
The project aspires to the same Core Values of Chick History, which are:

- Historical Accuracy and Inclusion. We strive for the highest standard of historical accuracy and inclusion of all histories, even controversial ones.
- Stewardship. We responsibly and thoughtfully interpret the stories we share and for which we are entrusted.
- Diversity. We commit to telling a range of histories that reflect the diversity of the state of Tennessee and Tennessee women.