

“She Died for Freedom:” Emily Wilding Davison, Inez Milholland and
the Value of Martyrs to the Militant Suffrage Movement

By

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Introduction

In 1913, Emily Wilding Davison, a former teacher and full-time agitator for the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) ran onto the Epsom Race track in England where she was kicked in the head by the king's horse. Her skull was fractured and she died shortly after the accident. In 1916, Inez Milholland Boissevain, lawyer and socialite collapsed from exhaustion in Los Angeles while giving a speech as part of a National Women's Party (NWP) speaking tour. After the incident Milholland Boissevain spent the next month in the hospital with anemia from which she eventually died. Both of these women became martyrs for the organizations they belonged to after they passed away. The WSPU and NWP harnessed the attention and emotion connected to these deaths to craft these women into symbols for their members. In both the United States and Britain martyrdom gave militants a platform through which they could distill their message about the importance of militancy in a way that reflected the position of the suffrage movement in their respective country.

At the turn of the 20th century some women in the Britain and the United States began to feel that the tactics of the women's suffrage movement needed to change significantly. Throughout the 19th century activists for increased women's rights had mostly used petitions and speeches to try and forward their cause. Occasionally more shocking actions like the Susan B. Anthony's arrest for illegally voting in 1872 interrupted traditional tactics. But for the most part women wanted to prove that they were worthy of citizenship by acting in a way that was seen as respectable. Campaigning for suffrage in the 19th century did bring about some gains such as the right to vote being given to women in several western American states, and the ability of women to vote for school boards in the Britain. Still, traditional campaign measures had not gained

universal suffrage for women in either country, and brought about progress too slowly for women who would become militant.

In 1905 Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested in Manchester, England for interrupting a meeting of the Labour party. The event marked the beginning of the militant suffrage movement in Great Britain led by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) which had been founded by Christabel's mother, Emmeline Pankhurst in 1903. Eventually the influence of the Pankhursts reached to the United States in the form of the National Women's Party, the American militant suffrage group founded by former WSPU member Alice Paul. The tactics of militants were designed to draw attention and force change by challenging the status quo to a further degree than any other suffragists. Moderate suffrage organizations like the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) or the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) challenged societal norms, but for the most part followed the law to prove women deserved the ability to participate. Militants refused to fully comply with laws that they had no part in making, and saw themselves as in conflict with governments that refused to recognize their rights.

While militant tactics were used both in the United States and in England the tenor of the actions taken in each country differed. Militant actions in Britain were more violent than in the United States and included actions such as window breaking, arson, and defacing of both money and portraits in the National Portrait Gallery. Women who participated in these actions became known as suffragettes. In the United States, militant action was centered around more peaceful confrontations such as parades and picket lines in front of the White House. Militant women in America felt a connection to militants in Britain, but rejected the term "suffragette" along with

the violence of their British counterparts. However, militants in both countries engaged in actions that directly challenged the realm of what was deemed socially acceptable for women.

Moderate groups like the NUWSS in Britain and the NAWSA in America, both founded in the late 19th century, worked diligently for women's right to vote at the same time that that militant suffragists were active. However, the creation of the WSPU and the NWP in the early 20th century marked a shift in the women's suffrage movement towards more aggressive tactics in England and the United States. Militancy changed what women did to advocate the vote, as well as how they viewed their actions and their movement. Women who engaged in these activities felt great dedication to the cause and were willing to go to great lengths for the franchise. Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland in particular gave up everything to benefit the fight for the ballot. The way that each organization used the sacrifice of its members for their own means reveals a great deal about what these deaths represented to the NWP and WSPU.

The idea of martyrdom has existed since antiquity, yet lacks a precise definition. As Jolyon Mitchell points out in *Martyrdom: A Very Short Introduction* various groups have claimed martyrs for different reasons throughout history.¹ Socrates, suicide bombers and Jesus Christ have all been declared martyrs showing just how broadly the title can be applied. The academic study of martyrdom contains varying perspectives on what degree an individual must show agency in their persecution, how much they must suffer and if they have to die in order to be considered a martyr.² In the broadest possible view, a martyr must either make a decision or take an action which puts them in harm's way as part of their faith in or commitment to a larger

¹ Jolyon Mitchell, *Martyrdom: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2

² Jolyon Mitchell, 3.

cause. The intense level of dedication to a cause necessary in order for a person to become a martyr has made them a subject of interest for centuries.

Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland became martyrs to their cause after their deaths. However, the differences in the way the militant suffrage movement was positioned in Great Britain and the United States at the times of these deaths created a discrepancy in the way each martyr was used. Emily Wilding Davison, died at a point when the WSPU had been engaged in increasingly aggressive militant actions for years and a death seemed possible if not likely. Davison's death was a culmination of years of animosity between militants and the government which confirmed British militants' beliefs about the efficacy of their tactics and the necessity of sacrifice in order to win the vote. Inversely, The NWP had just formed and militant action had not truly begun yet when Inez Milholland died. Milholland's death provided a reason to begin using militant tactics in the United States and became the catalyst for more extreme suffrage demonstrations in Washington.

As martyrs, Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland provided an outlet to the WSPU and NWP to crystalize their message about the importance of and relationship to militancy. However, while the deaths of Inez Milholland and Emily Wilding Davison have both been studied to some degree by historians, they have not been looked at extensively in relationship to one another.

The history of the militant women's suffrage movement is a field which has only begun to develop in roughly the last forty years. Early histories of the suffrage movement were written by women who had been involved in the cause themselves. Suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton set a standard for women's rights activists acting as the recorders of their

own history when they produced the multi-volume work *History of Woman Suffrage*.³ In this work Anthony, Stanton and their cohorts were able to define what events were important to their cause, why and how they happened. Their history functioned as an extension of the ideals of the early women's movement, as well as an opportunity to define their own legacy.

Militants whose actions were far more controversial than those of Stanton and Anthony, also saw a great value in being able to define what they had done, and why they took such extreme actions. In Britain, WSPU leader Emmeline Pankhurst, who had often talked about how Anthony and Stanton inspired her, published *My Own Story* within a year of British militancy coming to a close.⁴ Her account explained how she came to feel that militancy was the correct course of action to create change, and defend her cause from criticisms against their actions. Other suffragettes, including Emmeline Pankhurst's daughter Sylvia also wrote accounts of their time as militants presenting themselves as part of a great awakening for women.⁵ In the United States, Doris Stevens' *Jailed for Freedom* was among works that similarly explained and defended why Americans turned to militancy in order to win the vote.⁶ American and British accounts function as an extension of militant suffrage propaganda, and use many of the same arguments to explain why militancy was necessary. Both non-militant and militant accounts of their own actions are presented as true representations of what happened. However, these works are more primary source documents than histories, crafted to show their subjects in the best light possible. The lack of interest by historians in militant suffrage meant that these documents, although flawed, were the only historical sources on militancy for decades.

³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881).

⁴ Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (New York: Hearst's International Library, 1914).

⁵ E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement; an Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1931).

⁶ Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920).

The rise of second wave feminism in the 1960's and 70's lead to increased interest in the women's suffrage movement. In both the United State and the United Kingdom there was a clear effort by second wave feminists to record the experiences of militants. However academic works done on militant suffrage during this time were limited and those that existed focused on exploring the flaws of militancy.

In the United States study of women's suffrage was largely done by non-academics and contained to the 19th century. Oral Historian Sherna Gluck's *From Prison to Parlor: Five American Suffragists Talk About their Lives*, which record the experience of American militants was the exception rather than the rule in its focus.⁷ Gluck's publication along with Schocken books 1976 republishing to *Jailed to Freedom* were among the only works to explore militancy in the United States.⁸ Then as now the clear juggernauts of the American suffrage campaign were Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Deservedly, both of these women were given the attention of those writing histories, for their work starting and shaping the women's suffrage movement. Suffrage histories which did not deal with these women directly still often focused on other suffragists of the 19th century, like Jean Stapleton's *Vanguard Suffragist: Lucy Stone*.⁹ Histories of suffragists like Stone necessitated that Anthony and Stanton also be remarked upon since the three women often reacted to the actions of the others. Constance Buel Burnett's *Five for Freedom: Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt* covers in its title the women who were often seen as the most representative of the American suffrage movement.¹⁰ Four out of the five women covered in this

⁷ Sherna Berger Gluck, *From Prison to Parlor: Five American Suffragists Talk about their Lives* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976).

⁸ Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

⁹ Jean Stapleton, *Vanguard Suffragist: Lucy Stone* (Santa Monica: Women's Heritage Series, 1971).

¹⁰ Constance Buel Burnett, *Five for Freedom: Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt* (New York: Abelard Press, 1953).

work represent the 19th century suffrage movement while Catt, the one woman who worked into the 20th century and Anthony's successor as head of the NAWSA, was strongly against militancy in the United States, proof of the limited value that was given to American militancy at this point.

In Britain, where militant action had been much more prevalent, the Pankhurst family were the most well remembered suffragists. The actions of the Pankhursts, and those in their orbit, were given the historical focus afforded to Anthony, Stanton and their cohort in the United States. Additionally, the suffragettes, became a topic through which the validity of feminism was fought between male academic historians and non-academic feminist historians. David A. Mitchell's *The Fighting Pankhursts: A Study in Tenacity*, focused on the family as the driving force behind militant action, while also positing that increasing aggression on the part of the WSPU would have ultimately hurt the suffrage movement more than help it had militancy continued.¹¹ Liz Stanley and Anne Morley were among non-academic women who felt that men like Mitchell's view of the suffragettes reflected their own fear of feminists. The degree to which academic historians were viewed as influenced by their own prejudice to non-academic feminists is clear in Stanley and Morely's description of Mitchell as "writing while frequently glancing nervously over his shoulder and with one protective hand cupped over his crotch".¹² Works by non-academic feminists, such as *The Life and Death of Emily Wilding Davison: A Biographical Detective Story*, focused on presenting the suffragettes as using deliberate political tactics that they deeply believed in. June Purvis outlines in "Gendering the Historiography of the Suffragette Movement in Edwardian Britain: Some Reflections," that as more women become academic

¹¹ David A. Mitchell, *The Fighting Pankhursts: A Study in Tenacity* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

¹² Liz Stanley and Ann Morley, *The Life and Death of Emily Wilding Davison: A Biographical Detective Story* (London: Women's Press, 1988), 79.

historians the argument about the validity militant tactics continued, mostly split along gender lines.¹³ The initial development of these arguments showed that the militant suffrage movement in Britain was a valid area of study.

The 60s and 70s saw the rise of women's suffrage as a valid topic of historical study. The 80s and 90s saw academic historians work to dissect the ideology behind militant actions. Works like Lisa Tickner's *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914* and Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp's *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes: The Women's Social and Political Union, 1903 – 1918* dissected the propaganda, both visual and verbal, perpetuated by the suffragettes.¹⁴ The narratives and tropes presented by the suffragettes became a way to understand the motivations and justifications for their actions. At the same time works like Sandra Holton and June Purvis' compilation *Votes for Women* looked at the how the WSPU and its members worked to help the cause, developing a greater sense of how the WSPU worked.¹⁵ The 90's and early 2000s also saw important work done by historians June Purvis and Alyson Brown on the prison experiences of suffragettes, showing not only what the suffragettes were willing to endure for the cause but the value they found in that sacrifice.¹⁶ Together the work of these historians began to build a more well-rounded view of the militant suffrage movement in Britain based on academic research.

In the United States, suffrage history was now a recognized academic field of study, however it remained mostly focused on Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton

¹³ June Purvis, "Gendering the Historiography of the Suffragette Movement in Edwardian Britain: Some Reflections," *Women's History Review* 22, no.4 (2013): 576-590.

¹⁴ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp, *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes: The Women's Social and Political Union, 1903 – 1918* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999).

¹⁵ Sandra Stanley Holton and June Purvis, *Votes for Women*, (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁶ June Purvis, "The Prison Experiences of the Suffragettes in Edwardian Britain," *Women's History Review* 4, no.1 (1995): 103-133; Alyson Brown, "Conflicting Objectives: Suffragette Prisoners and Female Prison Staff in Edwardian England," *Women's Studies* 31, no.5 (2002): 627-644.

throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Some academic articles like Sally Graham's "Woodrow Wilson, Alice Paul, and the Woman Suffrage Movement" began to explore the ways in which Alice Paul and the NWP put pressure on the American government through militancy.¹⁷ Some work was also done on the material culture of the American suffrage campaign in the 1990s as well. Alice Sheppard's *Cartooning for Suffrage* and Margaret Finnegan's *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women*, explored how American militants presented themselves in print and in public, in order to make themselves and their ideas easily consumable to the public.¹⁸ These works represent the beginning of academic work on the militant suffrage movement in America which would continue into the 2000s.

In the new millennium, American militancy was given increased academic attention. Biographies of Alice Paul like Katherine H. Adams and Michael L Keene's *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign* and Bernadette Cahill's *Alice Paul, the National Woman's Party and the Vote: The First Civil Rights Struggle of the 20th Century*, present Alice Paul as a distinct figure in American suffrage history worthy of study in order to understand the development of women's rights and political protest in 20th century America.¹⁹ Belinda A. Stilton Southard's book *Militant Citizenship: Rhetorical Strategies of the National Woman's Party, 1913-1920* analyzes the militant tactics used by the NWP to put immediate and visible pressure on the government, and especially the president, to acquiesce to their demands.²⁰ Meanwhile academic articles like Katherine Feo Kelly's "Performing Prison: Dress, Modernity and the Radical

¹⁷ Sally Graham, "Woodrow Wilson, Alice Paul and the Woman Suffrage Movement," *Political Science Quarterly* 98, no. 4 (Winter 1983): 665-679.

¹⁸ Alice Sheppard, *Cartooning for Suffrage*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Margaret Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

¹⁹ Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene, *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Bernadette Cahill, *Alice Paul, the National Woman's Party and the Vote: The First Century Rights Struggle of the 20th Century* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2015).

²⁰ Brenda A. Stilton Southard, *Militant Citizenship: Rhetorical Strategies of the National Woman's Party, 1913-1920* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011).

Suffrage Body” and Catherine H. Palczewski’s “The 1919 Prison Special: Constituting White Women’s Citizenship” described the way that American militants who had been to prison leveraged their experiences to try and force change.²¹

The understanding of American militancy that was created through the academic study done in the 2000s and 2010s, created a platform for further work to be done on women connected to American militancy like Inez Milholland. Articles like Ann Marie Nicolosi’s “‘The Most Beautiful Suffragette:’ Inez Milholland and the Political Currency of Beauty” defined how American suffragists, including Milholland herself, capitalized on her popularity in order to benefit the suffrage movement.²² Linda J. Lumsden added to the study of Inez Milholland’s allure in her book *Inez: The Life and Times of Inez Milholland* which additionally charted how Milholland’s life-long commitment to the ideals she believed in led to her untimely death.²³ The development of scholarship on Inez Milholland allowed for greater insight into the beginning of American militancy before the more well-known actions like picketing and prison specials began.

As scholarship of American militancy was beginning to develop, arguments once again rose over the validity of the tactics of the Suffragettes in Britain. Following the September 11th terror attacks scholars began to debate whether or not the WSPU was taking part in acts of domestic terrorism. Emily Wilding Davison represented an important aspect of this debate as historians like Martin Pugh in began to compare her death and development into a martyr to that of a suicide bomber.²⁴ The debate over how and why Davison died, became tied to questions of

²¹ Katherine Feo Kelly, “Performing Prison: Dress, Modernity and the Radical Suffrage Body,” *Fashion Theory* 15, no.3 (2011): 299-321; Catherine H. Palczewski, “The 1919 Prison Special: Constituting White Women’s Citizenship,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 102, no. 2 (2016): 107-132.

²² Ann Marie Nicolosi, “‘The Most Beautiful Suffragette:’ Inez Milholland and the Political Currency of Beauty,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 6, no.3 (2007): 286-309.

²³ Linda J. Lumsden, *Inez: The Life and Times of Inez Milholland*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

²⁴ Martin Pugh, “The Good Terrorist,” *History Today* 63, no.6 (2013): 4-5.

the legitimacy of the actions of the WSPU, and if they were going beyond what was necessary to achieve their goals. Articles like Gay L. Gullickson's "Emily Wilding Davison: Secular Martyr?" and Carolyn Christensen Nelson's "The Uses of Religion in the Women's Militant Suffrage Campaign in England" looked to define the sentiment and ideology within the WSPU that led Davison to run onto the race track, and also directed other WSPU members to immediately understand that death as a martyrdom.²⁵ Adding to this discussion, Carolyn P. Collette dissects the published and unpublished writing of Emily Wilding Davison in her book, *In the Thick of the Fight: The Writing of Emily Wilding Davison, Militant Suffragette* to track her own ideas of martyrdom and sacrifice and how her perceptions may have led to her death.²⁶

Despite the increased attention given to the deaths of both Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland, little work has been done to compare these events to one another. The American and British suffrage movements had close ties to one another. Many academic works on either the British or American suffrage movement will mention the impact of one country upon the other in passing. Patricia Greenwood Harrison's *Connecting the Links: The British and American Woman Suffrage Movements, 1910-1914* is one of the few works dedicated to exploring the way that the various suffrage movements on both sides of the Atlantic intertwined at the beginning of 20th century.²⁷ In part due to the fact that the study of militancy is still relatively new, few works other than Harrison's explore the trans-Atlantic nature of suffrage, both militant and non-militant. As an effect of this lack of scholarship on the links between

²⁵ Gay L. Gullickson, "Emily Wilding Davison: Secular Martyr?" *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 75, no.2 (2008): 461-484; Carolyn Christensen Nelson, "The Uses of Religion in the Women's Militant Suffrage Campaign in England," *Midwest Quarterly: A Journal of Contemporary Thought* 51, no.3 (2010): 227-242.

²⁶ Carolyn P. Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight: The Writing of Emily Wilding Davison, Militant Suffragette* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

²⁷ Patricia Greenwood Harrison, *Connecting the Links: The British and American Woman Suffrage Movements, 1910-1914* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000).

British and American suffrage, the martyrs of the NWP and WSPU have not been evaluated side by side.

Several members of the American militant suffrage movement had been members of the WSPU, including Alice Paul and Inez Milholland. For deaths directly tied to the fight for suffrage to occur in both of these groups is therefore notable and worthy of study. This paper will build upon previous work done on the mentality of the WSPU and NWP as well as the deaths of both Inez Milholland and Emily Wilding Davison to compare the creation of two suffrage martyrs. Doing so will illuminate similarities in the way that propaganda worked in the militant campaign in America and the United Kingdom, while also explaining differences in the way that both groups related to militancy.

Exploring the ways that suffragists used martyrdoms in the United States and Britain provides a new way to examine the differences and similarities between militant movements. In order to develop a sense of how the deaths of Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland impacted the NWP and WSPU I have relied greatly on the suffrage press. Suffrage organizations published many of their own newspapers to disseminate their own ideas and narratives. In the UK *Votes for Women* and later the *Suffragette*, act as the official organs of the WSPU, while papers like *the Suffragists* represented the position of the NWP in the United States. The coverage in these papers of the deaths of Davison and Milholland shows how militant organizations presented these events. I have used the speeches of WSPU leaders like the Pankhursts, along with articles from *Votes for Women* and the *Suffragette* to illustrate the circumstances that led up to the death of Emily Wilding Davison. The Home Office File which records Emily Wilding Davison's time in prison also illuminates her state of mind and dedication to the cause before her death. Correspondence between Inez and Vida Milholland and Alice Paul

over the course of the speaking tour which eventually led to Inez's death also play an important part in this study. These letters and telegrams illustrate the circumstances that led to Milholland's death and the narrative that was immediately crafted to justify it. Militant suffragists left a paper trail that details what led to the deaths of members, and the reaction to these deaths. Analyzing the circumstances in which these martyrs arose a picture can be crafted of what martyrdom meant to militant suffragists, and how the value of martyrs differed in the United States and Britain.

This work follows a mostly chronological order. Chapter one tracks the development of the WSPU, and how the combination of increased antagonism with the police and the poor treatment of suffragettes in prison lead to a fascination with martyrdom in the group culminating in the death and martyrdom of Emily Wilding Davison. Chapter two will track how the illness and death of Inez Milholland, a celebrity within and without the NWP, allowed for a narrative of martyrdom to form that provided a catalyst and justification for future militant action in the United States. Chapter three will illustrate how the propaganda arms of the NWP and WSPU utilized the deaths of Inez Milholland and Emily Wilding Davison to galvanize their members. Together these chapters will show how martyrdom helped to define militancy in the United States and Great Britain.

Chapter 1 – The Martyrdom of Emily Wilding Davison

Although the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was founded by Emmeline Pankhurst in 1903, militant action did not begin until 1905 when Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested for interrupting a meeting of the Labour party by demanding the speakers address when women would be given the right to vote. The two women were jailed drawing a great deal of attention to the WSPU. From that point on the WSPU was keenly aware of how important it was to generate awareness of their cause. The Pankhurst's set out to spread their message about the wrongs done to women, and their need for the vote. Militant action was the centerpiece of the WSPU, whose motto was "deeds not words." Agitation that disrupted public life and imprisoned women shocked the English public and drew attention to the arguments the suffragettes propagated in the suffrage journals like *Votes for Women* and later *the Suffragette*. Continued militancy also pressured the government to listen to their demands or face more disruption. As the militant campaign continued the WSPU's actions became more extreme, and Suffragettes began to feel that sacrifice was necessary in order for the vote to be won. Ultimately, this feeling culminated in the death of Emily Wilding Davison.

The arrest of Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney put the Suffragettes in direct conflict with the police. Suffragettes experienced assaults from police officers, harsh prison conditions and forced feedings throughout the militant campaign. More moderate organizations like the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), which had been active since 1897, focused on using traditional tactics like petitioning at the same time that the WSPU was active. However, they received much less public attention than the suffragettes, and their tactic of petitioning and hoping to have pro-suffrage MP's elected had led to few gains for women.

The suffragettes not only saw militant tactics as necessary, but reveled in such action. In their mind, the government ignored the concerns of women and needed to be forced to address them. In the minds of the suffragettes, interrupting the working of British society, especially a society they were not allowed to contribute to, was the ideal way to pressure those in power into listening to their demands. Emmeline Pankhurst articulated this theory, declaring that, “women in the twentieth century are in a world where they are forced to say that an appeal to justice, that an appeal to reason, that evidence of their fitness for citizenship should be of less value than the breaking of panes of glass,” as such they had to fight for their rights.¹ Marching on Parliament, defacing property and breaking shop windows interrupted everyday British life to the degree that it demanded attention. The form that attention took was not entirely positive, and many were critical of their tactics. Still, the government was openly discussing women’s rights to a larger degree than they had before.² Women made the government react to them as opposed to the other way around. The antagonism experienced by these women gave validation to their actions. The government and the police violated women’s rights, the WSPU had reason to take action in their own defense. At the same time the attention that was given to them both by the government and the public because of their actions proved the political usefulness of continuing militant tactics.

The discord between the suffragettes and the police shaped WSPU propaganda. Harsh treatment of Suffragettes while in custody allowed the WSPU to portray themselves as pursuing a righteous cause in the face of a corrupt authority that denied them their basic rights. As the

¹ Emmeline Pankhurst, “The Argument of the Broken Pane,” in *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes*, ed. Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), 144.

² Three Conciliation Bills to give women the right to vote were introduced to the House of Commons between 1910 and 1912. None of the bills were ever put to a vote, but the debate over these measures was the most sustained attention parliament had given to the idea of women’s suffrage up to that point.

suffragettes came into greater conflict with police and arrests continued, the WSPU looked to portray their own suffering as a necessary sacrifice and vividly described the experiences of those who had been imprisoned. Most issues of *Votes for Women* mentioned the names and experiences of those who had been imprisoned suffragettes. A typical account can be seen in the January 7th, 1910 issue of *Votes for Women* where Suffragette Lily Norbury is described as “looking very pale and ill,” as a result of her going on hunger strike in prison and being force fed for the majority of her sentence.³ Regardless of her experience Norbury is described as “full of the W.S.P.U spirit, and [sic] prepared to continue militant work as soon as she is well again.”⁴

Many suffragettes released accounts of their time in prison and talked about them in speeches including Sylvia, Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst, Annie Kenney, Lady Constance Lytton and Emily Wilding Davison.⁵ In doing so the suffragettes showed the extent of their suffering for a righteous cause. Those who were released from prison commonly remarked upon their physical and emotional suffering. However, these accounts also described how willing these women were to keep agitating for the vote. The prison experience was not a deterrent to these women, rather it was something to endure in order to earn the vote. The WSPU made it clear that they were prepared to place themselves in harm’s way as long as political circumstances dictated this was the way to win the vote.

Sacrifice was an essential component to create change according to the suffragettes, and the WSPU held a great deal of reverence for women who sacrificed for the cause. The WSPU were masters of creating spectacles, and suffrage prisoners often played a large part in those displays. Released prisoners had dinners held in their honor where they were given prison badges

³ “Releases of Prisoners,” *Votes for Women*, January 7th, 1910, 236.

⁴ “Releases of Prisoners,” 236.

⁵ Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp, *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes: The Women’s Social and Political Union 1903-1918* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 199): 104-106.

to wear as medals that showed they did their part in the battle for women's rights.⁶ Former prisoners and hunger strikers often marched together in suffrage parades.⁷ Militant demonstrators positioned themselves outside of prisons singing suffrage songs to show solidarity with suffragettes who were currently serving their sentences.⁸ All of this ceremony instilled a sense of glory into the suffering that Suffragettes experienced. The honor bestowed upon women who gave of themselves for the cause provided greater meaning to what they went through. It also reinforced the idea that their actions were worthy of reverence because they would ultimately lead to the liberation of all women. A premium was placed on the suffering of WSPU members. The willingness of women to experience pain for the cause already defined the way many militants saw their group and themselves before Davison died.

Shared suffering for the greater good built a sense of comradery among WSPU members. In *Prisons and Prisoners* Lady Constance Lytton describes the support that the suffragettes gave to one another after having been force-fed. Kept in adjoining cells "I tapped on the wall and called out at the top of my voice... 'no surrender,' and then came the answer past any doubt in Elsie's voice, 'no surrender.'"⁹ An exchange like this one illustrates the suffragettes simultaneously supporting each other through their pain while also encouraging one another to keep going. Alyson Brown describes the power that suffragettes in prison had through their commitment to a shared cause that allowed them to push back against prison regulations.¹⁰ Suffragettes were able to form a coalition through their shared ideas and experiences that

⁶ "medal," 96.103/21, "People's City: Suffragettes," Museum of London. This is one of example prison pins and badges given to Suffragettes who had gone to prison that is held by the Museum of London.

⁷ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 117.

⁸ June Purvis, "The Prison Experiences of the Suffragettes in Edwardian Britain," *Women's History Review* 4, no. 1 (1995): 112.

⁹ Constance Lytton, *Prisons & Prisoners: Some Personal Experiences*, (London: W. Heinemann, 1914), 271.

¹⁰ Alyson Brown, "Conflicting Objectives: Suffragette Prisoners and Female Prison Staff in Edwardian England," *Women's Studies* 31, no.5 (2002): 630.

allowed them to not only persist through the abuses they suffered but continue to fight for what they felt was right. The connection created through shared trauma in this account and others was made into something that went beyond the normal bonds of friendship. The sense that suffering benefited other women sustained many suffragettes in their actions. A definite allure was built around taking actions that placed oneself in harm's way. It was for this reason that despite the well-known risk attached to militant action Emmeline Pankhurst received an enthusiastic response when at a WSPU event she declared, "I incite this meeting to rebellion."¹¹ Militant women recognized the need to "put aside all craven fear" and throw themselves into the militant campaign."¹²

Stressing women's suffering did more than show the righteousness of the suffragettes. This tactic put pressure onto the government in a very real way. In her memoir Emmeline Pankhurst recalled "when two of our women were made so ill in Holloway that they had to be released within a few days, the politicians began to tremble for their prestige."¹³ The suffragettes were keenly aware that their pain applied political pressure to those in power. The suffragettes did not suffer, as critics often alleged, because they were hysterical, or because they enjoyed the pain, or because they sought attention and sympathy for themselves alone. In a letter to *the Manchester Guardian* in 1908, Member of Parliament Arnold Lupton wrote of his disapproval of militant tactics, which at the same time paradoxically proving its value. In his estimation, "[the suffragettes] go to prison for the sake of being made martyrs at the expense of the government...The one thing that gives vitality to this kind of [militant] agitation is the element

¹¹ Emmeline Pankhurst, "Great Meeting in the Albert Hall," in *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes*, ed. Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), 282.

¹² Emmeline Pankhurst, "Great Meeting in the Albert Hall, 281.

¹³ Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (New York: Hearst's International Library, 1914), 76.

of hardship, the opportunity of heroic endurance that results from this imprisonment.”¹⁴ Lupton’s argument was common among the critics of the suffragettes; however, it shows that militant tactics worked as intended. The letter proves that militancy both irritated people enough to make them pay attention to suffrage, and provided the militants an outlet through which they could show their dedication to the cause. They also, garnered sympathy for themselves and shame the government.

Martyrdom in the way that Lupton and his cohort used the term was a pejorative to describe militants who they felt were milking their prison experiences for personal glory along with political gain.¹⁵ However, his remarks show that years before Emily Wilding Davison’s death in 1913, the idea of a militant martyr was conceivable to those outside of the WSPU, if not those within it. The more women went to prison, the more people paid attention to the suffrage cause, and in turn it became more likely that women would get the franchise. Emmeline Pankhurst was firm in the conviction that “The way to reform has always led through prison.”¹⁶ If women became martyrs, it was not because they wanted to suffer, it was because the government refused to listen to them unless or until they put themselves at risk. Their actions were driven by political necessity, not personal vanity.

The response to Lady Constance Lytton’s *Prisons and Prisoners: Some Personal Experiences* is a clear example of the pain of prisoners could create public sympathy. Lytton was a member of the gentry and the sister of a Member of Parliament. She had been previously arrested and was convinced that she had not been force fed because of her station.¹⁷

¹⁴ Arnold Lupton, “Suffragette Tactics – Letters to the Editor,” *Manchester Guardian*, November 2, 1908, 4.

¹⁵ Gay L. Gullickson, “Militant Women: Representations of Charlotte Corday, Louise Michel and Emmeline Pankhurst,” *Women’s History Review* 23, no. 6 (2014): 847-848.

¹⁶ Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 188.

¹⁷ Lytton, 309.

Subsequently disguised as Jane Warton, a middle-class spinster, Lytton participated in protests which again led to her arrest. “Jane Warton” was subjected to force feeding and other harsh conditions during her time in prison. Lytton described the experience of being force fed in excruciating detail, including the harsh treatment by the doctor who “when he had fed her by force and tortured her body, struck her on the cheek to show how he despised her!”¹⁸ The public outrage over Lytton’s account was great, and gained the WSPU a good deal of sympathy. Changes in the law were made in order to quell the public outrage over this and other accounts of force feeding.¹⁹ The resulting Cat and Mouse Act, which allowed prisons to release hunger striking prisoner and re-arrest them once they were deemed healthy, was potentially even more harmful for suffrage prisoners than force feedings. Still, the change in policy did show that the WSPU was able to pressure the government into making changes through public sympathy for their suffering.

Martyrdom became a greater theme in WSPU materials as militant action increased and the suffragettes faced harsher sanctions from the authorities. Figures like Boudicca and Joan of Arc became prominent in Suffragette media. Both of these figures were representations of how the suffragettes saw themselves.²⁰ Women who stood for their cause in the face of overwhelming power and refused to give up their ground. Marguerite Johnson describes the use of historical women warriors was a way for suffragettes to simultaneously present themselves prepared to fight for those who supported them and against those who denied their rights.²¹ Joan of Arc and Boudicca provided historical precedent for the militancy of the WSPU. At the same time the reverence given to these figures provided the suffragettes with another reason to glorify WSPU

¹⁸ Lytton, 270.

¹⁹ Jorgensen-Earp, 295

²⁰ Tickner, 209-210.

²¹ Marguerite Johnson, "Boadicea and British Suffrage Feminists," *Outskirts* 31 (2014): 9

members who similarly suffered for their cause. Historical martyrs frequented suffrage banners, and Joan of Arc was frequently used in suffrage imagery, including the cover of each issue of *The Suffragette* strengthening the connection between women who suffer for the cause and militant suffragists in Great Britain

Emily Wilding Davison played an active part in crafting the narrative of sacrifice that was prominent in the WSPU. Davison was among the women who provided accounts of their prison experiences. Her accounts are largely similar to other prisoners in discussing the justification of her actions and the pain experienced at the hands of her jailers. Davison was also the author of various articles in the suffrage press about historical women who had suffered and persevered for their beliefs.²² Carolyn P. Collette uses these biographical articles written by Davison as evidence of her interest in women who were able to benefit society through their vision in the book *In The Thick of the Fight: the Writing of Emily Wilding Davison, Militant Suffragette*.²³ Collette's argument focuses greatly on the impact of religious faith in these accounts, and how the alignment with a higher power that would fulfill a greater vision played a part in the mentality of the suffragettes. However, it is also clear in these accounts that the women Davison described besides, being religious, were also active in trying to create change. In these biographical articles, Davison portrayed women who benefited the greater good by sticking to their own ideas and doing what they saw was necessary regardless of the obstacles in their way.

Davison's account of the Grimke sisters in particular illustrates the traits that she felt were essential to creating change. In particular Davison focuses on the fact that the Grimke

²² Carolyn P. Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight: The Writing of Emily Wilding Davison, Militant Suffragette* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 75.

²³ Collette, 75.

sisters continued to do what they felt was right even as those closest to them disavowed their actions. The pain of disavowing their slave-owing family was so extreme “it was almost a martyrdom to have to testify against [their] own friends and kin,” however the mental anguish did not prevent them from taking action.²⁴ Davison’s description of martyrdom is more reliant on the willingness of the Grimke sisters to go through painful experiences for the cause than it is on the two of them experiencing a specific type of pain or death. The broad view of martyrdom expressed in this essay reflects the emphasis of conviction over consequences that would define Davison’s future actions.

Davison chronicled women like the maid of Saragossa, the Grimke sisters and Florence Nightingale, stressing their mental and physical perseverance in the service of what they felt was right.²⁵ These were the types of women that Davison was putting forward for suffragettes, including herself, to emulate. Having the determination and conviction to do whatever was needed for the cause was clearly something that Emily Wilding Davison put great emphasis on and wanted others to feel the same way. Davison’s future actions proved how closely she held this ideal.

Davison’s belief in the value of suffering for the benefit of the cause is also clear in her Home Office file. The file represents the British government’s records on Davison’s actions while in prison. Although Davison was arrested on multiple occasions the bulk of the file deals with the reaction to a single incident during her prison sentence in June of 1912. On June 22nd 1912, Emily Wilding Davison threw herself down the stairs at Holloway prison in protest of the force feeding of Suffragettes. After her fall, Davison was given a physical and psychological examination, by prison doctors in part to determine if she could still be force fed after the fall.

²⁴ Emily Wilding Davison, “Women’s Part in Freeing the Slaves,” *Votes for Women*, October 14, 1910, 19.

²⁵ Collette, 96.

The doctors who examined Davison filed reports on the incident that went into her Home Office File. An interview of Davison and her own handwritten account are also included in the file. By all accounts the fall from the top of the stairs could have killed her had she not landed on wire netting that was on a landing between the top and bottom of the stairwell.²⁶ The incident showed the extent of Davison's dedication to the cause, and the police's awareness that a Suffragette martyr was very much possible.

The Home Office file shows that Emily Wilding Davison was clear in her conviction. The medical review of Davison after her fall revealed that "she felt that something terrible must be done to bring an end to the present state of affairs...and she considers that she is right to do anything for the cause."²⁷ Davison thus expressed it did not matter to her whether her actions caused her death, but the medical officer made clear "I do not regard her as suicidal."²⁸ The action that Davison took was a deliberate attempt to draw attention to and sympathy for the WSPU, it was a secondary concern if it would cost her life. The potential propaganda that the WSPU could generate from an event like this could lead the political change that the suffragettes were looking for.

The reaction of the police to Davison's actions shows they were to some degree unsurprised by what happened. The prison doctors felt that despite the fall there was "no reason from abstaining from the necessary steps for compelling the prisoner to take nourishment" leading to Davison being force fed regardless of her injuries.²⁹ Beyond the medical exams there

²⁶ Report re: Emily Wilding Davison, 27 June 1912, HO 144/1150/210696, "*Miss Emily Wilding Davison (suffragette) killed when she threw herself under the King's horse at the Derby in 1913*," National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom.

²⁷ Report re: Emily Wilding Davison.

²⁸ Report re: Emily Wilding Davison.

²⁹ Letter to Governor from W.C. Sullivan, June 23rd 1912, HO 144/1150/210696, "*Miss Emily Wilding Davison (suffragette) killed when she threw herself under the King's horse at the Derby in 1913*," National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom.

was not specialized response to Davison's fall, prison staff continued to treat her as they would any suffrage prisoner. The fact that Davison was neither given some sort of immediate reprieve or steeper punishment in response to her action is quite striking. The lack of response proves that Davison's actions were seen as in line with those of other suffrage prisoners and therefore did not necessitate special treatment.

The reaction of the prison staff seems especially placid in relation to the reaction of WSPU members to Davison's fall. Davison was not the only one who felt drastic action was necessary, other members were actively supporting her actions. When Davison threw herself down the stairs "another prisoner came from the lavatory and said 'They want a death and can have it – no surrender.'"³⁰ WSPU members were making it clear that a martyrdom was possible if not likely.

It was in the context of increasing tensions with the police and greater willingness to suffer for the cause that Emily Wilding Davison went to Epsom Race track on June 4th 1913. During the Epsom Derby Davison ran onto the race track and attempted to grab the reins of the King's horse. In the course of her actions, the horse kicked Davison in the head, knocking her unconscious, fracturing her skull and leading to her death four days later.³¹ Whether or not Davison meant to die at the Epsom race track, it is that she was willing to endanger her life for the suffrage cause.

Immediately after Davison's death the WSPU set about crafting Davison into a suffrage martyr. The death of Emily Wilding Davison gained a great deal of attention because it happened

³⁰ Minutes, June 25 1912, HO 144/1150/210696, "*Miss Emily Wilding Davison (suffragette) killed when she threw herself under the King's horse at the Derby in 1913*," National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom.

³¹ Debates over whether Davison meant to die at Epsom have continued since her death. Several articles recounting the debate on both sides have published exploring the topic, especially around the centennial of Davison's death. Jilly Boyce Kay and Kaitlynn Mendes, "Gender, Media and Protest: Changing Representations of the Suffragette Emily Wilding Davison in British Newspapers, 1913-2013," *Media History* 21 (2018): 1-16; Elizabeth Crawford, "Emily Wilding Davison: Centennial Celebrations," *Women's History Review* 23, no. 6 (2013): 1000-1007.

at the biggest horse race of the year. The Epsom Derby was a major sporting and social event, attended by the King and Queen, afforded a great deal of press coverage every year. In 1913, the extensive coverage for the derby was forced to report on the militant suffrage cause due to the accident. Many newspapers were concerned with the safety of the horse rather than with Davison who they were apt to portray as a misguided and suicidal soul. *The Daily Express* article titled “Blighted by Militancy,” for instance describes Davison as being under “the malignant influence of militancy” which brought her to a point of “pathetic loneliness,” ignoring any sense of agency or purpose in Davison’s Actions.³²

In the immediate wake of Davison’s death, the WSPU used the suffrage press to present their own reasoning for the actions taken at the Epsom derby. In doing so the suffragettes took the publicity generated from the event and used it to propagate their own message. The first issue of *The Suffragette* published after Davison’s death the focused on showing how the narrative of Davison’s life led to her ultimate sacrifice. The paper removed any of the potential criticisms of Davison that the non-suffrage press had leveled against her. Christabel Pankhurst, the editor of *The Suffragette*, took care to compile accounts of the event from other papers which focused on the unprecedented nature of the action and the conviction of the woman who threw herself in front of the horse.³³ In doing this Christabel was able to make the event appear as unanimously important, and Davison as someone all acknowledged as devoted to her cause rather than suicidal. Davison was now a political tool for the WSPU, and presenting her as suicidal or misguided, as the non-suffrage press had, would only undermine the effectiveness of that tool. Following these remarks with a biography of Davison stressing her intelligence, diligence and

³² “Blighted by Militancy,” *The Daily Express*, June 11, 1913; Emily Wilding Davison’s Home Office File, “Miss Emily Wilding Davison (suffragette) killed when she threw herself under the King’s horse at the Derby in 1913,” National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom.

³³ “The Supreme Sacrifice,” *The Suffragette*, June 13, 1913, 578.

devotion illustrated that she was a dynamic individual who made her own decisions individual rather than a woman driven by her own hysteria.³⁴ Having laid this foundation of how to view Davison the person, the story of Emily Wilding Davison the martyr could be crafted.

Suffrage newspapers initially defined the meaning and worth of Davison's sacrifice. *The Suffragette* issued on June 13th 1913 featured a long editorial by Christabel Pankhurst that established the WSPU's line on Davison's death. In Christabel's description Davison had reached a plane that few are able to reach in her willingness to do what was necessary for the greater good. "It is only men and women of superhuman generosity and courage who can die for those unseen, unheard, unknown. This is what Emily Wilding Davison has done."³⁵ Just as Joan of Arc and Boudicca, had given up everything for their beliefs so had Emily Wilding Davison. "Emily Wilding Davison resolved that she would strive by her death to purchase something for the people she left behind her. Therein lies her greatness."³⁶ She became the embodiment of everything the WSPU felt about the importance of sacrifice for the greater good.

A wave of testimonials from prominent Suffragettes included later in the paper would further crystalize the value of Davison's contribution.³⁷ Suffrage leaders like Annie Kenney and Emmeline Pankhurst laid out their admiration for what had happened at Epsom. Lady Constance Lytton called Davison, "the truest upholder of our Great Cause, and the most fearless of those who serve it."³⁸ They instructed the rank and file of the WSPU how to process Davison's death. They also showed the masses that Davison's actions were not an anomaly, but something that even the leaders of the WSPU admired. The importance of Davison's death was such that

³⁴ "Emily Wilding Davison – In Memoriam – 'I'll put a girdle round the World,'" *The Suffragette*, June 13, 1913, 578-579.

³⁵ Christabel Pankhurst, "Emily Wilding Davison," *The Suffragette*, June 13, 1913, 576.

³⁶ Christabel Pankhurst, 576.

³⁷ "Some Appreciations," *The Suffragette*, June 13, 1913, 580.

³⁸ Constance Lytton, "Some Appreciations," *The Suffragette*, June 13, 1913, 580.

according to suffragette Edith Mansell-Moullin “she is worthy of the highest rank among the martyrs all down the ages who have voluntarily laid down their lives for a holy cause.”³⁹ The pages of this issue of *the Suffragette* served to deify Emily Wilding Davison, but also stressed that her actions were necessary.

The Suffragette used Davison’s own statements to establish the value of a suffrage martyr. The first issue published after the derby dedicated a whole page to Davison’s remarks after she was released from prison in June 1912. In these comments, the future martyr was defending her decision to throw herself down the prison stairwell. In her mind “One big tragedy may save many others.”⁴⁰ By appropriating these words the WSPU was at once proving the conviction of Davison, while also showing the inevitability of something like this happening. It was accepted WSPU doctrine that the cause demanded sacrifice, Davison’s death was an extension of that ideology. Davison’s words, as used by Christabel Pankhurst, proved that she understood the needs of the cause and was willing to give of herself in order to fulfill those demands.

The points covered in the first issues of *The Suffragette* after Emily Wilding Davison’s death became common in all militant suffrage media that referenced Davison. The February 6th, 1914 issue of *Votes for Women* published by former WSPU leaders Emmeline and Fredrick Pethick-Lawrence commented “Emily Davison then threw herself on to the waves of the opposition in order to save others.”⁴¹ Gertrude Colemore’s book *The Life of Emily Wilding Davison* published in 1914, also stressed the fact that Davison “died that other women might find it possible to live truer, happier lives” and “gave herself to the Woman’s Cause, without grudging

³⁹ Edith R. Mansell-Moullin, “Some Appreciations,” *The Suffragette*, June 13, 1913, 580.

⁴⁰ Emily Wilding Davison, “A Year Ago,” *The Suffragette*, June 13, 1913, 577.

⁴¹ Maud Arncliffe Sennett, “A Sacrifice and its Result: How Northern Men have ‘Hitched on’ to Woman Suffrage,” *Votes for Women*, February 6, 1914, 285.

and without fear.”⁴² The militant movement grabbed onto the narrative of Davison’s sacrifice put forward by Christabel Pankhurst and propagated it well after her death. The continued use of Davison’s sacrifice in suffrage media, meant that militants were always reminded of the sacrifices necessary for women to win the vote. The suffrage press crystalized and proliferated their vision of how Davison and her death should be viewed, but the market for that message was limited to readers of these publications. The funeral of Emily Wilding Davison provided the suffragettes with a public platform to widely disseminate their view of what had happened.

The funeral procession for Emily Wilding Davison was a major spectacle and functioned as a way for women to pay their respects while also cementing Emily Wilding Davison as a symbol of martyrdom and sacrifice for the suffragettes. The Suffragettes had a great deal of practice throwing parades, and would put all of that experience to use at this event.⁴³ In speeches WSPU members often referred to themselves as members of an army, and Davison’s funeral procession was akin to a military funeral. 40,000 women dressed in black in combination with the WSPU colors marched behind Davison’s coffin down the streets of London on June 14th, 1913.⁴⁴ While the general public did not read suffrage newspapers, it was much harder to avoid such a public display, especially one that was designed to draw the attention of the national press. Reverence for Davison was clear throughout this event, not only by the sheer number of people involved but also from the banners that declared Davison had died in order to provide liberty for womankind.⁴⁵ Suffragettes had long been criticized for fetishizing their own suffering. The funeral of Emily Wilding Davison made it clear that the suffragettes mourned her death, and

⁴² Gertrude Colemore, *The Life of Emily Wilding Davison: An Outline* (London: The Woman’s Press, 1913), 60; Colemore, 61.

⁴³ Tickner, 138.

⁴⁴ Tickner, 138.

⁴⁵ Tickner, 138.

at the same time showed reverence and respect was shown for the sacrifice that had been made. In one of the most famous photographs of the funeral procession, women carry a banner reading “FIGHT ON & GOD WILL GIVE THE VICTORY.”⁴⁶ The sentiment on that banner made it clear that in the suffragettes’ view, Davison did the right thing by fighting for the cause, and that her death would not be a deterrent to others doing the same. Regardless of the risks, militancy would continue.

Davison’s ascension to official suffragette martyr was verified through this funeral. The display was highly affecting to many who saw it, “Not even the most convinced opponent of Women’s suffrage who happened to see the funeral procession of Miss Davison pass through the London streets could fail to be impressed with the deep earnestness of those participating.”⁴⁷

After Emily Wilding Davison had been laid to rest she continued to be a standard by which the WSPU could prove the lengths they were willing to go for the vote. In fact, it seemed more likely that more deaths would follow Davison’s. The Cat and Mouse Act of 1913 allowed the police to release hunger striking prisoners when their health deteriorated but re-arrest them after their recovery. This left many women in extremely fragile health. In *the Suffragette* from June 27th, 1913 two full pages were filled with details on the poor health of women who had been released as part of the Cat and Mouse Act.⁴⁸ The condition of these women, who could be taken back into custody by the police at any moment, was abysmal. The bodily strain of undergoing repeated hunger strikes with little time to recover in between would almost inevitably lead to another death. Still, almost every account from those released remarked upon their “indomitable spirit that can never be crushed” and their desire to endure whatever might be

⁴⁶ Photograph of Emily Wilding Davison’s Funeral, 50.82/1462, “People’s City: Suffragettes,” Museum of London.

⁴⁷ “The Birmingham Post,” *The Suffragette*, June 27, 1913, 623.

⁴⁸ “Cat and Mouse Torture: Death for Women or Votes for Women,” *The Suffragette*, June 27, 1913, 618-619.

thrown in their way for the cause.⁴⁹ Davison had given everything for the cause, and any suffragette would be willing to do the same. In the words of Annie Kenney “we have no fear of death, because there is nothing to be afraid of.”⁵⁰

The commitment of these women to continue to take actions that might send them to prison, despite the risk to their own bodies and lives put a great deal of pressure on the government. The WSPU were claiming that the government was trying to kill them through the Cat and Mouse Act.⁵¹ Davison’s death had shown both that Suffragettes were willing to die for the cause and that a great deal of attention along with some sympathy would be given to them when that happened. The suffragettes blamed the government for putting Emily Wilding Davison in the position where she felt she had to run onto the racetrack in order for women to be given their rights. Despite the fact that some outlets blamed Davison for her own death, the suffragettes were still able to use that event to powerfully propel their own arguments. The political cache that the WSPU would gain if a suffragette died under the government’s care would be immense. The full power of the suffragettes’ propaganda cultivated by Davison’s martyrdom would be aimed squarely at the government that had caused it. The value of these women’s lives gave the suffragettes a political advantage. WSPU leader Emmeline Pankhurst was especially aware of this fact.

Emmeline Pankhurst was the most recognizable and visible figure in the militant suffrage movement, with the possible exception of her daughter Christabel. Pankhurst was also the most prominent woman affected by the Cat and Mouse act. Even before the death of Emily Wilding Davison there was concern that the Cat and Mouse act would kill Emmeline Pankhurst. *The*

⁴⁹ “Miss Lennox,” *The Suffragette*, June 27, 1913, 618.

⁵⁰ Annie Kenney, ““Our Spirits are Eternal,”” in *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes*, ed. Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), 321.

⁵¹ Kenney, 318.

Suffragette reported on Pankhurst's state of health, in boldface, each week.⁵² The Pankhurst matriarch was notably absent from the funeral of Emily Wilding Davison, because she was re-arrested on her way to the event. Her absence was ominous, and made clear that the eldest Pankhurst might not be there to lead the suffragettes in the future. To the WSPU the martyrdom of their leader seemed imminent. A master of political messaging, Pankhurst knew her value to the WSPU and the attention that would be given to the cause if something should happen to her.

A month after Davison's death, Emmeline Pankhurst was talking publicly about the possibility of her own death. In a speech given at Albert Hall Pankhurst would declare to the government "Kill me or give me my freedom: I shall force you to make that choice."⁵³ Pankhurst was making it clear that her death, or any death of a WSPU member would galvanize the movement "at any rate the movement is not going to die, and that is all that matters."⁵⁴ Emily Wilding Davison had proved that the Suffragettes could fulfill this threat. Women's bodies would endure for the cause whatever was necessary for as long as necessary. The government had to decide how many women they wanted to have die before they gave women the franchise.

There is no way to predict how many British women may have become martyrs in the pursuit of the vote, had the Archduke Franz Ferdinand not been assassinated. World War 1 took away the pressure of militant woman's lives from the British government. With the country focused on fighting external threats, internal conflicts had to end. Circumstance prevented both the suffragettes from showing how far they would be willing to push the government until women were given the vote. However, the willingness of suffragettes to give their lives for the cause was certainly not an empty threat, as Davison had shown.

⁵² "Mrs. Pankhurst," *The Suffragette*, June 27, 1913, 619.

⁵³ Emmeline Pankhurst, "Kill Me, or Give Me My Freedom!" in *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes*, ed. Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), 316.

⁵⁴ Emmeline Pankhurst, "Kill Me or Give Me My Freedom!," 314.

Emily Wilding Davison's death represented the culmination of nearly a decade of militant ideology in Great Britain. The reasoning that Davison herself gave for actions that put her at risk lined up perfectly with the WSPU's ideology about the value and necessity of suffering in order to create the change they wanted. Many members of the WSPU understood and embraced Davison's sacrifice as something important. Running onto the racetrack was an extension of the narrative of giving of oneself for the greater good that the suffragettes had propagated since 1905. While there was a sense among WSPU members that a martyrdom was likely, once Davison died the Rubicon had been crossed and all avenues were open in terms of how the Suffragettes might decide to give of themselves for the cause. The political value of Davison's death made the potential of future loss of life something that the WSPU used to their advantage. Davison's death was the logical culmination of suffragette tactics and ideology. The reverence given by the WSPU to those who suffered for the liberty of women was encapsulated in the way they reacted to Davison's sacrifice. That more British suffrage martyrs do not exist is a product of circumstance rather than a change in the conviction of WSPU members.

Chapter 2: The Martyrdom of Inez Milholland

The National Women's Party (NWP) was the militant wing of the suffrage movement in the United States. Many of the women who joined the NWP had first gone to Europe and joined the WSPU, including both NWP founder Alice Paul, and Inez Milholland who later died in the course of the American Suffrage campaign. Alice Paul had been among those who was inspired by the methods of the Pankhursts, went to prison and endured forced-feeding. In 1913, Paul began to utilize some of the imagery and themes of the WSPU, including the practice of casting women as Joan of Arc to lead suffrage parades. Alice Paul and other members of the NWP were intimately aware of the potential effectiveness of propaganda used by the WSPU, therefore when Inez Milholland fell ill and the chance to create a martyr arose they were prepared to take advantage of it.

Unlike the Suffragettes, the NWP had to their advantage a well-known figure to craft into a symbol of sacrifice. Emily Wilding Davison had worked in the shadow of Pankhurst and was relatively unknown in the United Kingdom during her lifetime. Inez Milholland on the other hand, already well-known in the United States before her death. Milholland was a member of a prominent family, and lawyer. Milholland began to develop into a popular figure during her time at Vassar. Nicolosi describes Milholland's vocal support for women's suffrage making her a highly visible figure both on campus and in the popular press in New York.¹ Milholland's fame was connected to her dedication to suffrage from the start. The intensity of her beliefs in combination with the theatrical way in which she displayed them, was a key element of her celebrity.

¹ Ann Marie Nicolosi, "The Most Beautiful Suffragette: Inez Milholland and the Political Currency of Beauty," *The Journal of the Gilded and Progressive Era* 6, no. 3 (July 2007): 292.

Inez Milholland to a certain degree became a “typical celebrity.” The press, drawn in by her good looks and style, frequently covered her social life in the society pages. Still there was no way for the press to ignore. Inez’s social activism; that an undeniably beautiful woman, with good standing would act in defiance of social norms was too compelling for the press or the public to ignore.² The more attention that Inez Milholland got for her suffragism the more famous she became, meaning that both she and her cause acquired greater visibility. Recognizing the power of having a celebrity in the ranks, efforts were made to utilize and build upon Milholland’s fame by members of the suffrage party, including Inez herself.

Inez Milholland was keenly aware of her appeal and used it to advance causes that she endorsed. As Nicolosi states “Milholland was an active agent in marketing herself.”³ Milholland took extreme and demonstrative actions that drew attention to herself and her causes and was unafraid to directly challenge those who were in the wrong. She was among the women arrested during the New York during the shirtwaist factory strike and was known to loudly and publicly criticize public figures who were against suffrage.⁴ Her actions reflected the strategies of the British suffragettes. Unlike the suffragettes who, with the exceptions of the Pankhursts, did not have their own press following, Inez Milholland drew attention to herself in whatever she did. Ann Marie Nicolosi argues that the alluring and glamorous figure Milholland had crafted herself into represented what women could be, a precursor to the New Woman of the 1920s.⁵ Before she died Inez Milholland was already a powerful political tool because of her own

² Nicolosi, 292.

³ Nicolosi, 295.

⁴ Linda J. Lumsden, *Inez: The Life and Times of Inez Milholland* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2004), 65.

⁵ Nicolosi, 296.

awareness and manipulation of her celebrity. Her allure drew eyes to causes she participated in that would have otherwise been uninterested if a celebrity was not involved.

Milholland was not alone in crafting her image to benefit the cause. Various members of the suffrage movement had used Milholland's fame to draw attention to the cause. An early instance of this was the decision of Alice Paul to cast Milholland as Joan of Arc for a groundbreaking suffrage demonstration in 1913. At the time of this event, the NWP had not been founded and Alice Paul was the head of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (CU), a branch of the more conservative National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). However, many of the tactics that would come to define the NWP were developing. A few months after the parade the first issue of *The Suffragist*, the future organ of the NWP was published.

Alice Paul had seen the ways that the WSPU had utilized Joan of Arc as a powerful symbol first hand, and wanted to use the same imagery in the United States. Paul decided to have a suffrage parade in Washington on the day of Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. Paul had Inez Milholland on horseback, dressed as the French martyr lead the parade. *The Washington Post* remarked that "the arrival of Miss Inez Milholland, the beautiful society girl of New York, gave complete support to the claim of the suffragists that some of the most beautiful women in the country are active in the equal rights cause," proving the impact that her presence had on shaping the qualities that defined the suffrage cause.⁶ As the herald of the parade, Inez Milholland was the first person seen by spectators, and both physically and ideologically led the way for the rest of the procession. In photographs of the event Milholland is seen sitting on top a white horse in a white Grecian style dress and cape topped with a golden star on her head. Linda J. Lumsden

⁶ "5,000 of Fair Sex ready to Parade," *Washington Post*, March 3, 1913, 1.

describes how the image of Milholland astride her horse at the head of the procession created the impression of a woman confident in her own freedom.⁷ For many years anti-suffragists depicted women who wanted the vote as old, ugly and overtly masculine in cartoons, and postcards.⁸ The purpose of these images was to undermine suffragists as unhappy, masculine women who were a threat to society because they would emasculate men if they got their way. The appearance of noted beauty Inez Milholland at the head of the parade was a direct refusal of the idea that suffragists were unhappy masculine women. As she pushed through a notably rowdy crowd on her horse, Milholland illustrated that women could be confident in their demands for freedom without compromising their femininity.⁹ Dressed as Joan of Arc, Inez Milholland represented an aspirational figure rather than a threatening one.

One of the most well-known American suffragists was embodying a figure who represented the dedication, will and glory that members of the parade organizers saw as essential to their cause. The symbolism made clear to a national audience the qualities the American militants admired. The fact that Inez Milholland was chosen to represent those qualities, reinforced the idea that she was also a symbol herself of what suffragists could and should be. When she died, the image of Inez Milholland leading the way on top of her horse became a powerful symbol to encourage women to continue on for the cause in the model of their martyr.

A great political tool had been uncovered for in the form of the fame of Inez Milholland. Unfortunately, for all the benefits that fame gave to Milholland and her causes, it also ultimately played a part in her death. In 1916 Alice Paul and Lucy Burns founded the National Women's Party as a group distinct from the NAWSA. In that same year Inez and her sister, Vida, were sent

⁷ Lumsden, 87.

⁸ Alice Sheppard, *Cartooning for Suffrage* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 60.

⁹ Lumsden, 87

by the NWP with other suffragists to campaign in western states against the Democratic party. It was hoped by the NWP that the pressure applied by women who already had the vote could convince the government to bestow the franchise on all women. Alice Paul and Doris Stevens were in charge of scheduling the events that different suffragists took part in from the NWP office in Chicago. However, the organization of the speaking tour was haphazard. As Milholland and her sister went out west letters came to the NWP from women hosting numerous events in other western states asking that representatives be sent to their states. For example, Mrs. Lamson in Seattle, Washington sent a telegram to the headquarters of the NWP stating “immediate need is for speaker in small gatherings in private homes and womans clubs plan to have speaker daily visit all meetings of clubs for brief talk.”¹⁰ NWP organizers in Chicago were working to fulfill as many of these requests as possible. As a result, Stevens and Paul continued to add events to Inez’s schedule while she was on the road. It is apparent from the letters and telegrams sent cross country that Inez would sometimes get off a train to find that her itinerary was changed and events were added without her knowledge.¹¹

A letter from Alice Paul to Miss E. St. Clair Thompson, who was to meet Inez during her stop in Tucson, Arizona, indicates the issues in communication with those on the tour, and those coordinating it. Thompson was asked to send “word to Miss Stevens...giving the exact arrangements for Miss Milholland and Mrs. Baker during their trip through Arizona, so that there may be no mistake in their going to the wrong places or making the wrong connections.”¹²

Conformation of what Milholland was supposed to do in the state was important since “the

¹⁰Telegram from Mrs. Lamson, October 15, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹¹ Letter from Alice Paul to Miss E. St. Clair Thompson, October 14, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 54, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹² Letter from Alice Paul to Miss E. St. Clair Thompson, October 14, 1916.

change in the itinerary was made after Miss Milholland started, so she will pursue the original itinerary unless she is informed that she is no supposed to do so.”¹³ No one on the ground had a clear idea of what was expected of them. Given the frequency of correspondence going on between Alice Paul, Doris Stevens and NWP members hosting events, it isn’t clear if Paul and Stevens understood what each woman was supposed to do, or how much was being asked of them. However, the women on the campaign trail were expected to fulfill all of their obligations even if it pushed them to their limits.

The value of publicity was clear in the letters sent between NWP members in the course of this campaign. The more that women on tour were seen the more attention was brought to their cause. Alice Paul constantly asked about that publicity speakers were getting for their meetings, and wanted newspaper clippings of coverage when possible NWP members who hosted events were responsible for generating as much publicity as possible. Letters that Alice Paul and Doris Stevens instructing organizers on the ground on what types of places to hold meetings, and how to present those spaces in order to generate the best publicity for events.¹⁴ Maximizing the potential for publicity on this tour meant that all members participating would need to attend as many events as possible. This was especially true in the case of well-known members like Inez Milholland and Harriet Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. A letter to Jessie Hardy Mackaye, describes that the Colorado Branch of the NWP is trying to work around Blatch’s exhaustion. The letter concludes with the statement “you can decide on how to reach the greatest number of people without killing Mrs. Blatch.”¹⁵ The comment is most

¹³ Letter from Alice Paul to Miss E. St. Clair Thompson, October 14, 1916.

¹⁴ Letter from Doris Stevens to Beulah Amidon, October 16, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹⁵ Letter to Jessie Hardy Mackaye, October 14, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 54, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

likely meant in jest; however, it does show that NWP organizers were very aware of the fact that they were putting great demands on the women on the campaign trail for publicity.

Inez Milholland was pushed the hardest of all the women on the campaign, due in large part to her popularity. Before her collapse Milholland complained of feeling too sick to fulfill some of her obligations. On October 16th 1916 Alice Paul sent a telegram to Inez: “Pincus wires me you have telephoned you cannot fill Ogden date This would be a great diaster. Luncheon and theater meeting planned. Utah critical state...Implore you to keep Ogden engagement.”¹⁶ Milholland responded with her own telegram “In with tonsilitis hoped for day to recuperate will appear at Ogden and try to speak.”¹⁷ Milholland, like Blatch, needed a chance to recuperate. Paul may not have known the severity of Milholland’s illness, but she did know that Milholland was sick. Losing Milholland for even one event was in Paul’s mind was a disaster.¹⁸ To some degree Milholland agreed, otherwise she could have refused to go to the event. Inez continued to push on even though she was sick and knew that needed to recuperate. The legacy of the WSPU could be seen in the dedication to bring attention to the cause, even at the cost of an individual’s health. As Milholland’s health continued to deteriorate, she became an increasingly important symbol.

On October 22nd 1916, Inez Milholland collapsed while giving a speech in Los Angeles, California. From a publicity perspective, the event could not have happened in a better way. The drama of one of the most famous women in the country, falling ill in front of a large audience of people, inevitably drew a great deal of public interest. The fact that her last public statement

¹⁶ Telegram to Inez Milholland from Alice Paul, October 16, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹⁷ Telegram to Alice Paul from Inez Milholland, October 16, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹⁸ Telegram to Inez Milholland from Alice Paul, October 16, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

before collapsing was “Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty” gave the NWP a perfect moment to capitalize on.¹⁹ A letter from Emily Perry to Alice Paul on October 22nd describes the event in glowing terms. Stating “The Milholland meeting was a great success as you see by the newspaper clippings. Very enthusiastic audience.”²⁰ The theater of sacrifice was on display, and it was a great triumph for the NWP, but that did not mean that Inez Milholland was allowed to rest.

Milholland was rushed to the hospital and ordered to have immediate rest. However, Alice Paul and Doris Stevens were dealing with other women on the campaign trail who were having trouble keeping their schedules, and even skipping events entirely. Telegrams and letters show that Rose Winslow in particular was skipping events that she did not think were large enough, much to Paul’s consternation. Alice Paul wanted to avoid having Milholland miss event if it was at all possible. Not only did the campaign lose the draw of its biggest star, it was extremely difficult to divert other speakers to have them fill in for her. Telegrams show that Paul was frantically trying to send substitute speakers to Milholland’s upcoming events with little success. Within a day of her hospitalization Alice Paul was trying to get Inez Milholland back on the trail. Paul wrote in a telegram:

Organizers of meetings in despair possibility your not being present. You have been advertised widely. If you can possibly put in appearance and let someone else speak so as to keep engagements made on schedule it will be great help. I can get someone else to

¹⁹ Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene, *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 164.

²⁰ Letter from Emily Perry to Alice Paul, October 22, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

take main burden of speaking if you are only present. Wire immediately what you decide to do. Am greatly worried. – Alice Paul²¹

Paul stresses to Milholland the potential damage the tour faced if she did not continue with the tour. Issues compounded by the fact that many people did not initially realize that Inez was sick. People kept sending requests asking Paul “If you can send Miss Stevens, or better, Mrs. Boissevain” to their events.²² The demand to have Inez Milholland involved in events was high, and having her waylaid by sickness was not an option for Alice Paul or anyone else concerned with the success of the NWP.

Inez was also very aware of how important she was to the cause, and the value of her speaking. In responding to Paul, Milholland sent two telegrams explaining just how dire the situation was. The first “seriously ill tonsillitis must either cancel tour for operation or rest few days hoping to recuperate what is your advice wire losangeles” made clear that there were serious stakes to Milholland’s actions and that she wasn’t taking her absence from the tour lightly.²³ Her second telegram to Paul that day made those stakes even clearer, when she informed the NWP leader “Doctor insists upon two days rest to avoid complete collapse heart affected hope rest will improve me.”²⁴ The telegrams seem to have forced Paul to compromise. She agreed to let Milholland skip some of her engagements, but it would be a “calamity for you

²¹ Telegram to Inez Milholland from Alice Paul, October 23, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

²² Letter to Alice Paul from Clara Wolfe, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

²³ Telegram to Alice Paul from Inez Milholland, October 23, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

²⁴ Telegram to Alice Paul from Inez Milholland, October 23, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

to abandon the tour,” a few days without Inez was workable, an entire tour without her impossible.²⁵

Despite the optimism on behalf of both Milholland and Alice Paul that Inez would improve, she was never able to rejoin the campaign. Alice Paul and Doris Stevens continued to ask Milholland to rejoin the tour. However, within a few days of falling ill Inez was unable to raise her head.²⁶ The NWP would have to find another way to utilize Milholland’s allure to their benefit.

Vida Milholland, provided the NWP with a way to utilize her sister’s illness and eventual death in a letter written to Alice Paul on October 30th. Vida framed her letter to Alice Paul in the following way “For a long time I have been waiting to send you details of why Inez had to give up....”²⁷ Vida asked “can’t we in someway capitalize her [Inez’s] illness and get some votes that way? It sounds cold blooded but understand the situation too well...so here is what I suggest. Let the public know exactly what the Women of the union are contributing to this fight for freedom.”²⁸ To some degree Vida meant to alleviate the pressure put on Inez, by suggesting an alternative tool to use: the martyrdom of Inez Milholland. Inez the person could be allowed the time and space to rest while the symbolism of her sacrifice could continue to draw people towards the cause.

Vida transformed her sister’s entire time on the tour into a narrative of sacrifice leading inevitably to her collapse. Vida portrayed her sister as “so weak she could not get up and stayed in bed until the last minute,” yet noted that Inez got up and delivered her speeches because she

²⁵ Telegram to Inez Milholland from Alice Paul, October 23, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 55, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

²⁶ Telegram to Alice Paul from Emily Perry, October 29, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 56, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

²⁷ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916, MSSS34355, Box 1 folder 56, National Women’s Party Records 1850-1975, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

²⁸ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

was so dedicated to the cause.²⁹ Vida explains her sister's suffering in detail, as "shivering one moment + shuddering the next," but pushing herself to go on to the point that it seemed supernatural.³⁰ After being unable to function she nevertheless delivered a speech of such magnitude that "I have seldom heard her make a better one" and that those who came to see her "were delighted."³¹ This was not sustainable and "gradually fatigue like a blanket came down on her like and I never [sic] to see anyone in such a desperately weak state again trying to get about."³² The effort that Inez put forth for the cause was Herculean, but she did it because she felt so strongly about women's right to vote.

In Vida's telling, the extent of her sister's dedication became apparent on that day in Los Angeles. During this speech "she did speak splendidly but as she says she has no idea of what she said her head was swimming so wildly – in the middle she fell down like a log totally unconscious. When she was revived[?] she insisted upon returning to the stage...to the unbounded delight of the audience."³³ Once again, she was able to pull off a supernatural feat of strength to benefit the cause, but Inez had reached her limit. Vida was quick to illustrate the extent of her sister's medical condition which in addition to tonsillitis included a "pronounced anemia" where "her hemoglobin registered 40% whereas the average is 80%."³⁴ Inez had pulled off a heroic feat, one that could clearly draw the acclaim of the masses. Vida used the rest of her letter to show to Alice Paul the full extent how that could be used to the advantage of the NWP.

Inez Milholland's illness drew sympathy and concern from women across the country. Several women were so moved by the immensity of Inez's dedication to the cause that they

²⁹ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

³⁰ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

³¹ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

³² Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

³³ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

³⁴ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

volunteered to give blood to her in order to help her survive.³⁵ Almost immediately the collapse of Inez Milholland was viewed by NWP members as something monumental in the American militant suffrage movement. Letters sent by well-wishers to Vida, Inez and Inez's husband Eugene Boissevain during her illness show that other members saw the same transcendent quality to Inez Milholland's sacrifice as Vida. Many of the letters sent, comment on Milholland as a heroine. In a letter sent to Inez Milholland Chastity S. Haley calls her, "my young St. Michael" and compliments her "sincerity and heartwholeness in your work and mission" which caused her illness.³⁶ A letter from Alice Fisher Harcourt refers to Milholland as "you poor dear girl – working so hard for a cause you thoroughly believe in to be taken so suddenly."³⁷ Both letters, like Vida's, show the reverence that developed around Inez Milholland at the time of her illness. However, Vida's letter drew direct connections between Inez and the suffragettes that cannot be found elsewhere, and colored its future use by the NWP.

Having established the sacrifices of her sister, Vida Milholland was quick to place Inez in the same category as the British suffragettes. Early in her letter Vida notes that "the English militants won sympathy and world-wide admiration for their endurance of forcible feeding and the hunger strike."³⁸ Throughout her letter Vida established the endurance and perseverance of her sister as akin to the Suffragettes who had been sent to prison. She wanted her sister's illness to garner the same sympathy. But in the end of the letter Vida Milholland makes the explicit connection between her sister and suffragette martyrs. The sacrifices of those women had been historic, so too was Inez Milholland's part of "the history of the other [sic] fighters in the

³⁵ Inez Milholland Papers, 1906-1916; dates. MC 308, folder 17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁶ Inez Milholland Papers, 1906-1916; Letter to Inez Milholland from Chastity S. Haley, November 12, 1916. MC 308, folder 16. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁷ Inez Milholland Papers, 1906-1916; letter to Inez Milholland from Alice Fisher Harcourt, November 13, 1916. MC 308, folder 16. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁸ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

woman's party campaign."³⁹ Her suffering was something special; "you read about it occasionally in history when Christ and his few followers 'suffered unto death' ... and saddest of all Emily Wilding Davison."⁴⁰ Such sacrifice also marked something of British militant practices reaching the United States "a militancy that called for the highest sacrifice from themselves."⁴¹ Vida made her sister a symbol of sacrifice and martyrdom, one tied to the martyrdom of Emily Wilding Davison, even before she died. After Inez's death, the power of that symbol was seized upon by Alice Paul and used for the remainder of the militant suffrage campaign in the United States.

Inez Milholland in Los Angeles on November 15th, 1916 after a month in Good Samaritan Hospital. The immediate response to her death by Alice Paul and the NWP was very similar to, that of the Pankhursts and the WSPU to the death of Emily Wilding Davison. Several ceremonies were planned to honor Milholland, the largest of which was held on Christmas day 1916 in the United States Capital building. Like the funeral of Emily Wilding Davison, the event was a spectacle meant to draw the attention of the masses. Inez Milholland appeared at the suffrage parade dressed as Joan of Arc in Washington in 1913. The parade was part of Alice Paul's plan to put direct pressure on the government to pass a federal amendment that gave all American women the right to vote.⁴² Holding Milholland's memorial in Washington called back to the image of her as Joan of Arc, while also contributing to Paul's method of directly challenging the federal government.

³⁹ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

⁴⁰ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

⁴¹ Letter to Alice Paul from Vida Milholland, October 30, 1916.

⁴² Bernadette Cahill, *Alice Paul, The National Woman's Party and the Vote: The First Civil Rights Struggle of the 20th Century* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2015), 59.

The memorial of Inez Milholland possessed a distinct tone from that of the WSPU in their funeral procession for Emily Wilding Davison. By holding a ceremony in the capitol, surrounded by the statues of great Americans the NWP was able to connect Inez Milholland directly to those who had fought for freedom in the country. “It is fitting, women declare, that in a spot where the statues of Washington, Garfield, Lee and Calhoun, Governor Winthrop, Roger Williams, Father Marquette and Robert Fulton, run the gamut of noble achievement and sacrifice, this young woman’s ringing words of exhortation should be heard by the women of the nation”⁴³ In this location, the NWP was able to apply an American context to the ritual created by the WSPU. A call to arms developed which invoked women to follow in the American tradition of fighting for one’s rights as Inez had done. The suffrage press in America continued to develop the drive to militancy with Milholland’s death as a reason for this shift.

The Suffragist produced two memorial issues to Inez Milholland, which further defined what Inez Milholland and her death meant to the NWP. The issues served two purposes the first was to establish Milholland as a martyr. The mystification of Milholland starts from the very cover of these issues, but it is exceptionally clear on the December 23rd, 1916 issue. Although Milholland died in November the December 23rd issue of *the Suffragist* was the first dedicated to commemorating her sacrifice. The cover features a picture of Milholland from the 1913 parade in Washington dressed as Joan of Arc and the caption “Forward into Light!”⁴⁴ Images of Inez as Joan of Arc became an important part of crafting her martyrdom. The fact that she dressed as a martyr before her own martyrdom, made the connection seem more apt in hindsight. Using this image once again placed Inez Milholland at the head of the suffrage movement in America, and made clear her importance to the cause.

⁴³ “Nation Honors Inez Milholland,” *The Suffragist*, December 23, 1916, 7.

⁴⁴ “Inez Milholland Memorial Number,” *The Suffragist*, December 23, 1916, 1.

Milholland's character was defined and described in the pages of the memorial issues so that the masses could understand the immensity of her loss. Inez Milholland was no longer just the representation of the new woman, she was made into a sort of supernatural being. In the words of Wisconsin suffragist Ada James, "her contribution to the cause was unique – something different than anyone else has given. She is one of the few who will never die – or grow old."⁴⁵ Much in the way that Emily Wilding Davison was the icon of the WSPU, Inez Milholland was becoming a deity of the NWP. Milholland was a figure who was distinctly theirs, and whose death could only be interpreted as for their cause. The fact that images of Milholland dressed as Joan of Arc were prominently used increased the image of her as a saintly martyr. In a part of the December 23rd issue of *The Suffragist* the new martyr is described as the ideal suffragist, so fundamentally driven to improve the lives of women that death could not diminish her impact. "Inez Milholland stood for women. She lived for women, she died for women. She is in the heart of every woman whose heart beats for tomorrow. That tomorrow is clearer and nearer because Inez Milholland lived."⁴⁶ Inez Milholland was presented as the embodiment of everything and American suffragist could and should be.

The second purpose of the commemorative issues was to call women to arms and establish justifications for increased militant agitation through Milholland's sacrifice. In Britain, the Suffragettes cited growing animosity as the reason for their tactics, and the death of a suffragette seemed increasingly likely. In the United States where women in several states already had the right to vote and friction between authority and suffragists was minimal there was not a compelling reason to begin militant action. Inez became the catalyst for militant protests to begin. Having established the tremendous force of Inez Milholland, and the

⁴⁵ "The word of a Friend," *The Suffragist*, December 23, 1916, 6.

⁴⁶ "Nation Honors Inez Milholland," *The Suffragist*, December 23, 1916, 8.

importance of her loss, *The Suffragist* laid out how women should react in their bereavement. In doing so they lay the groundwork for the defense of more aggressive protests. There was one way to honor this glorious woman for her sacrifice: “That we finish the task she could not finish; That with new strength we take up the struggle in which fighting beside us she fell; that with new faith we here consecrate ourselves to the cause of Woman’s Freedom, until that cause is won...Let this be our tribute imperishable to Inez Milholland Boissevain.”⁴⁷ The death of Inez Milholland had to amount to something, and it was up to the members of the NWP to make sure that happened. The issue of women’s suffrage had to be pushed farther than it had before in order to honor the sacrifice of Inez Milholland.

Shortly after the memorials of Inez Milholland suffragists led a deputation with the President. The event represented the last resort for the NWP before taking up militant action, it was a direct challenge to the President to allow all American women their rights as citizens. As Doris Steven’s recalled in *Jailed for Freedom* “the President was brought face to face with the new protest of women against the continued waste of physical and spiritual energy in their battle.”⁴⁸ A clear attempt was made to put the blame for Inez’s death on President Wilson. Deputations given to the president during this day, included one from Milholland’s New York Memorial that stated “the death of this lovely and brave women symbolizes the whole daily sacrifice that vast numbers of women have made and are making for the sake of political freedom. It has made vivid the ‘constant unnoticed tragedy of this prolonged effort for a freedom that is acknowledged just, but still denied.’”⁴⁹ The message was clear, had women been given the vote, there would have been no reason for Inez Milholland to have worked herself to death. The

⁴⁷ Maud Younger, “Memorial Address: Delivered by Maud Younger at National Memorial at the Capital,” *The Suffragist*, December 30, 1916, 5.

⁴⁸ Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), 53.

⁴⁹ Stevens, 53.

memorial from New York made the feelings of the NWP explicit in stating, “we desire to make known to you, Mr. President, our deep sense of wrong being inflicted upon women in making them spend their health and strength and forcing them to abandon other work that means fuller self-expression, in-order to win freedom under a government that professes to believe in democracy.”⁵⁰ The NWP used the death of Inez Milholland to manufacture the same sense of animosity between suffragists and authority that had defined the militant suffrage campaign in Britain, placing Milholland’s blood on the hands of the government, specifically the president.

When Wilson failed to listen to their demands women began to picket in front of the White House. Picketing the White House allowed Alice Paul and the NWP to put direct pressure on the government to change in the model of the WSPU, without using the same violent tactics as the Suffragettes. Alice Paul, a Quaker, was committed to a non-violent approach to protest for her group.⁵¹ Still, the picketers, also known as silent sentinels, showed the same dogged determination to agitate for change as members of the WSPU had. The suffragettes committed themselves to interrupting daily life until women had the right to vote. By picketing the NWP put themselves in a position to upset the daily life of the most important man in America in order to create change. Large banners like those used by the WSPU were used by the NWP both in their own demonstrations and at the picket lines.⁵² One of the most prominent banners used on the picket line read “Mr. President How Long must Women Wait for Liberty” the last phrase that Inez Milholland said in public before her collapse.⁵³ Thus, a direct connection was made between the death of Inez Milholland and the failure of President Wilson for all to see. The President and all others who visited or walked past 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue were given a

⁵⁰ Stevens, 53-54.

⁵¹ Adams and Keene, 32-33.

⁵² Adams and Keene, 164.

⁵³ Adams and Keene, 164.

daily reminder that women wanted the vote. Although the silent sentinels were non-violent, their methods were militant. The determination of NWP members to undergo hunger strikes and force-feedings once arrests of picketers began showed their ideology was more similar to that of the WSPU than the NAWSA.⁵⁴

As militant protests continued in front of the White House and arrests began, the legacy of Inez Milholland continued to be utilized to galvanize American militants. The NWP used relics from their martyr's time as a militant to imbue events with some of the mysticism that had been connected to Milholland. The usage of signs that Milholland had carried in suffrage parades before her death became common practice in NWP demonstrations. Doris Stevens describes one procession outside the White House "Miss Vida Milholland lead the procession carrying her sister's last words... she was followed by Miss Beulah Amidon of North Dakota, who carried the banner that the beloved Inez Milholland carried in her first suffrage procession in New York."⁵⁵ Signs connected to Inez reinforced the idea that she was the reason why these protests were happening. Vida Milholland's continued presence in the NWP was used in a similar way. Vida, in some sense was the ultimate relic tying Inez to the ongoing militant campaign. The fact that Inez Milholland's sister was continuing to protest and was even imprisoned made a definite connection between her death and these actions. If Vida Milholland felt militant protest was the best way to honor her sister's sacrifice, who could argue otherwise? If Vida was willing to go this far, surely Inez would have also. In *Jailed for Freedom*, Doris Stevens describes how she could hear "the beautiful voice of Vida Milholland which rang through the corridors of the dreary prison" among the songs sung by Vida was "The Woman's Marseillaise" a song played at

⁵⁴ Brenda A. Stilton Southard, *Militant Citizenship: Rhetorical Strategies of the National Woman's Party, 1913-1920* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011), 139-140.

⁵⁵ Stevens, 78.

Inez's funeral.⁵⁶ Vida provided a connection to the legacy of Inez Milholland for militants, even as they suffered in prison. The fact that years later Doris Stevens remarked upon Vida Milholland singing songs from her sister's funeral while they were in prison shows the importance of that connection.⁵⁷

The symbolism of Inez Milholland as martyr was vital to explaining and maintaining the militant campaign in the United States. Vestiges of her memory were spread throughout as many militant acts as possible to justify what NWP members were doing. Given Inez Milholland's past with the WSPU and willingness to get arrested during the New York shirtwaist strike it is likely that she would have taken part in more militant protests in the United States had they occurred while she was alive. It is not as clear whether militant actions would have taken place in the United States if Milholland had not died, however. Before her death, Inez Milholland was already one of the most well-known suffragists in the country. She was an icon of beauty and conviction that countless people were drawn to, as confirmed by the demand for Inez at events on the campaign through western states. The symbolism already attached to her meant that when she became sick there was an established understanding of this woman and her allure to which the NWP attached a narrative of martyrdom and sacrifice to. The platform that this provided for the NWP was only magnified once Inez died. The attention created through the very public death of a celebrity allowed the NWP to draw sympathy to themselves and direct blame towards the government. Without the ability to craft such blame there was not a clear justification for the NWP to take more aggressive action in the United States. To be sure no one in the NWP wanted Inez Milholland to die. The NWP could have found another way to argue for the use of militant tactics in America if Milholland had lived. However, it is hard to think of another event that

⁵⁶ Stevens, 154.

⁵⁷ Stevens, 154.

could have given the NWP a better justification to take up the militant action which Alice Paul felt was necessary for women to get the vote.

Chapter 3: Martyrdom and Suffrage Propaganda

Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland were both dynamic women who died in the course of working toward women's suffrage. However, their dedication to that cause did not mean that they fell in lock step with the leaders of their organization. Inez Milholland invested time in other issues, like the New York shirtwaist factory strike and her article for McCall's magazine.¹ Emily Wilding Davison was apt to take actions that the Pankhursts did not sanction. Throwing herself down the stairs in Holloway and running in front of the King's horse were both actions that Emily Wilding Davison took without the knowledge of the WSPU leadership. Militant suffrage organizations used Davison and Milholland's exploits to their benefit, but women like Alice Paul and Emmeline Pankurst controlled their organizations tightly and did not favor martyrs whose inclinations were not totally in line with their own.

The NWP was in the process of creating their own propaganda apparatus in the model of the WSPU at the time of Milholland's death. Militant propaganda needed not only to sustain the movement, but to draw attention to a degree that surpassed any suffrage propaganda that had come before it. It was in this context that the deaths of Inez Milholland and Emily Wilding Davison were crafted into symbols to galvanize the cause. Alice Paul and the Pankhursts, specifically Emmeline and Christabel, were single minded in their dedication to the cause. Well-documented tensions existed between Sylvia Pankhurst and her mother and sister because of her interests in socialist issues beyond women's suffrage. The Pankhurst's were also often criticized for the amount of control that they wanted over the organization they had built.² The family's

¹ Ann Marie Nicolosi, "The Most Beautiful Suffragette: Inez Milholland and the Political Currency of Beauty," *The Journal of the Gilded and Progressive Era* 6, no. 3 (Jul, 2007).

² The Women's Freedom League was founded in 1907 by former WSPU members who took issue with the Pankhursts' tight control over the Union.

control extended to the propaganda coming out of the WSPU. Christabel wrote many articles in the suffrage journal *Votes for Women* before becoming editor of her own paper *the Suffragette*, and artist Sylvia Pankhurst was in charge of creating much of the imagery on posters, postcards and other ephemera that would become synonymous with the Suffragettes.³ Almost all aspects of WSPU publicity were controlled by the Pankhursts or their lieutenants meaning that the message put out by the WSPU was consolidated and consistent, thereby allowing the WSPU to be highly successful in propagating their specific ideology.

Alice Paul, having participated in the militant movement in Britain, modeled the propaganda of her own group on that of the WSPU, and put herself at the center of it. Paul's central role in the planning of the tour of western states shows that the amount of control she had over the message that was being displayed by the party. Earlier analysis of Paul's first suffrage parade shows that she was active in creating the visual tropes that defined the NWP. As the militant movement picked up in the United States, Paul began to appropriate more of the images and narratives used by the WSPU. The use of Joan of Arc in NWP parades and posters is one of the clearest examples of the appropriation of WSPU symbols. The French saint was used on the cover of every issue of *the Suffragette*, showing she was figure the WSPU held in high regard. When Alice Paul decided to cast Inez Milholland in the role of Joan of Arc she was attempting to recreate the same type of reverence in the United States. The suffrage memorabilia collection at the Schlesinger Library has many examples of pins and sashes produced by the NWP that look very similar to those from the WSPU.⁴ Even the purple, white and yellow American Suffrage

³ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 26-27.

⁴ Memorabilia collection of the Schlesinger Library, 1886-2018; MC 898. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

flag which Alice Paul was frequently photographed with bears a striking resemblance to the purple, white and green flag of the WSPU.

Paul, like the Pankhursts, also played a very active part in setting up the publication that propagated the ideas of the NWP, *the Suffragist*. Paul decided on the initial format on the paper which allowed her to easily reflect her ideas.⁵ The leader of the NWP on occasion also changed issues of *The Suffragist* before they went out to print, regardless of the objection of the editor.⁶ At the time of Inez Milholland's death, the propaganda arms of the NWP were not as established as those of the WSPU, however Alice Paul had a clear framework to emulate during and after Milholland's death.

The Pankhursts and later Paul were synonymous with the organizations they founded and became part of the propaganda produced by them. The cults of personality that formed around the Pankhursts and Alice Paul were necessary to the success of their organizations. Dedication to the leaders of the cause was a tangible reason for women to justify their militant actions. The popularity of these women also drew in new members and attracted public attention which benefited militant tactics. The popularity of Emmeline Pankhurst was such that at Women's Sunday, the largest WSPU demonstration the Suffragette leader walked in front of a procession carrying a large banner with her photo.⁷ Members also wore pins with the face of Mrs. Pankhurst or her daughter, along with other suffrage jewelry, on them to show their dedication to the cause.⁸ Similarly, picketers outside the White House carried signs with Alice Paul's name on

⁵ Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene, *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 45.

⁶ Adams and Keene, 47-48.

⁷ Tickner, 94.

⁸ "Badge," 50.82/1163, "People's City: Suffragettes," Museum of London. This is one of pins with the Pankhursts' face on that is held by the Museum of London.

them after she was given a particularly harsh prison sentence in 1917.⁹ The leaders of each organization became part of the propaganda that was put forth by militants; they were symbols for women to unify around and emulate.

Once Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland died, the job of defining their legacy belonged to women like Alice Paul and Emmeline Pankhurst, who were well versed in effectively creating and using symbols to use in propaganda to advance their aims. As martyrs, Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland represented an opportunity for the NWP and WPSU to craft new symbols to disseminate their message. Both women became the ideal militant for their respective country, and in the process, many of the individual characteristics that defined these women were lost.

Inez Milholland and Emily Wilding Davison took actions that benefited the militant suffrage cause up until their deaths. But for the most part, their actions were something that Paul and the Pankhursts reacted to, rather than directed. Once Davison and Milholland died it became easier for the NWP and WSPU to propagate idealized images of these women. Accounts of Davison and Milholland's life given after they died focus mostly on their dedication to the cause and their deep sympathy for all women. As Christabel Pankhurst described Emily Wilding Davison "So greatly did she care for freedom that she died for it. So dearly did she love women that she offered her life as their ransom."¹⁰ Similar terms were used to describe Inez Milholland once she died three years later. The more controversial aspects of their lives were not discussed. As shown earlier, no mention is made in *The Suffragette* or any other suffrage publication whether Davison's decision to run into Epsom race track was suicidal. Accounts of Milholland's

⁹ Photographs of Woman Suffrage Pickets, 1917, LC-H261- 9722, Harris & Ewing Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C.

¹⁰ Christabel Pankhurst, "Emily Wilding Davison," *The Suffragette*, June 13, 1913, 576.

life also neglected to mention the more scandalous episodes of her life like her embrace of free love.¹¹

The personality traits of Davison and Milholland which had complicated things for the NWP and WSPU were removed from the idealized martyrs presented by each organization. This made sense, since a symbol is much easier to connect with when free of scandal. However, almost anything that did not relate to suffrage was unmentioned in the accounts of martyrdom presented in *the Suffragette* or *the Suffragist*. There is little to no reference to Davison's mother, with whom she was very close, in the issue of *the Suffragette* dedicated to her death.¹² Nor is there any mention of Inez Milholland's family, including her husband, outside of Vida in the issues of *the Suffragist*, dedicated to her sacrifice.¹³ Anything other than the cause is of little importance in the description of suffrage martyrs. Vida Milholland is an acceptable person to be mentioned in connection to Inez because she is a NWP member, but any other family member of either Davison or Inez Milholland does not matter in this context.

A distinction exists between Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland the people and Milholland and Davison the martyrs. The martyrs as symbols needed to fit within the existing framework of the militant propaganda. Within that framework the vagaries and complications of people's lives cannot be reflected since the cause is the central issue. Rosoux argues that martyrs are defined based on the needs of the political circumstance rather than the manner of their sacrifice.¹⁴ The limited scope of characteristics that defined Davison and Milholland as martyrs

¹¹ Linda J. Lumsden, *Inez: The Life and Times of Inez Milholland* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2004), 183.

¹² *The Suffragette*, June 13, 1913.

¹³ *The Suffragist*, December 23, 1916.

¹⁴ Valerie Rosoux, "The Politics of Martyrdom," in *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology and Politics of Self-Sacrifice*, edited by Rona M. Fields (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 84.

helped the NWP and WSPU legitimize their cause in a way that was easily transferable within existing propaganda strategies.

In the mind of the militant propagandists explaining the feelings that drew these women to put themselves at risk was the most important aspect of establishing the narrative of suffrage martyrs. The focus in telling of suffrage martyrdom was put on Davison and Milholland's belief in doing all they could to help women achieve liberty, transforming the fight for women's equality into something important enough to die for through the propaganda of the NWP and WSPU. "Victims without good causes cannot become martyrs," as such martyrdom validated militant tactics.¹⁵ In both the United States and Great Britain martyrs were used to galvanize women to the cause of militancy. In issues of *the Suffragist* and *the Suffragette* published immediately after the deaths of Milholland and Davison respectively there is a call for members to dedicate themselves to the cause so that the sacrifice of these women would not be in vain. According to the suffrage press, Milholland and Davison felt so deeply about the rightness of the militant suffrage campaign, they gave everything to secure a better future for women; therefore, to not dedicate oneself to the cause after their sacrifice would in effect ignore their sacrifice and memory. Militant suffrage was affirmed as something worth committing to in the aftermath of their deaths through the creation of these martyrs. Inez Milholland and Emily Wilding Davison were extraordinary, according to portrayals in suffrage media, because they fully understood what militancy meant, and what was needed in order to advance women's rights. They were "The flaming torch that went ahead to light the way, the symbol of light and freedom."¹⁶ The total dedication to the cause that Milholland and Davison represented made them symbols of the

¹⁵ Rosoux, 96.

¹⁶ Maud Younger, "Memorial Address: Delivered by Maud Younger at National Memorial at the Capital," *The Suffragist*, December 30, 1916, 5.

ideal militant, and effective tools for Paul and the Pankhursts to use through the remainder of the militant campaign in each country.

The martyrdom of both Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland were especially effective tools for the militant suffrage movement because there was an established infrastructure of propaganda to capitalize on these events. Davison and Milholland thus became symbols for organizations that were well-oiled propaganda machines, ready to use their deaths for specific means. The limited definition given to Davison and Milholland as martyrs after their death allowed them to be placed into existing narratives about dedication to the cause. Joan of Arc or Boudicca were easily swapped out for Emily Wilding Davison or Inez Milholland. However, the public nature and recentness of their deaths gave displays connected to the suffrage martyrs a visceral quality that materials portraying other figures could not possess because they were directly connected to militancy, and the ongoing fight for women's enfranchisement.

The well-established practices of militant propaganda allowed both the WSPU and NWP to utilize the martyrdom of their members to the fullest extent possible. By crafting Davison and Milholland into somewhat of a blank slate for the propaganda arms of the NWP and WSPU to fill, all of the emotion connected to these events was placed within the context of existing militant narratives and tropes. They directed sympathy towards the deceased and the cause they supported while also directing blame at the society and institutions which caused these events by refusing women their rights. The NWP and WSPU quickly established their own narratives of the lives and deaths of Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland to the benefit of their cause.

The propaganda apparatus that played an integral role the militant movement in the United States and Great Britain was also central in defining how Davison and Milholland were remembered as martyrs. Although the martyrdoms of Emily Wilding Davison and Inez

Milholland represented different things to their organizations, the infrastructure around these events allowed them to permeate society and affect the women's rights movement to a much greater degree than would have been possible without existing propaganda campaigns. The NWP and WSPU were able to control the narrative of events and define their value in relation to their organizations and to the fight for women's rights as a whole. The authority and skills at propaganda these groups had allowed the sacrifice of Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland to be important political events and not only a loss of life.

Conclusion

The suffrage campaigns in Great Britain and the United States had been connected almost from the beginning. It seems more than a coincidence that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott began to discuss women's rights at an abolition meeting in London. Women were interested in what their counterparts were doing on the other side of the Atlantic from the Seneca Falls convention on. American suffrage leaders like Anthony and Stanton would often do tours of the United Kingdom and Emmeline Pankhurst would do the same in America to raise funds for the WSPU. Emmeline Pankhurst would claim that Susan B. Anthony was the one who told her to become militant.¹ In turn, Alice Paul utilized many of the tactics she learned from the Pankhursts in the United States. The United States and British suffrage movements were intertwined with each other almost from the start, so there was always a degree of similarity between the two. Despite the many connections and similarities between suffrage movements in the United States and Britain, the way that militant groups handled the martyrdom of their members in each country reflects fundamental differences in circumstance in the two national campaigns.

The creation of suffrage martyrs was designed to both influence the general public and motivate militant suffragists. Still, militants were more likely to understand and accept the reasoning given for these martyrdoms. In suffrage publications after each of these deaths Davison and Milholland were described as willingly going to the lengths demanded by the cause. However, the motivations of the martyrs were also stressed as being the same as other militants. There was little reason to describe how intensely these women felt to other women in the cause since they were driven by the same innate feelings. The deaths of these were seen as a tribute to

¹ Paula Bartley, *Emmeline Pankhurst* (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), 174.

the cause. Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland became the standards against which all other militants would gauge their own dedication and prove how far they would go.

The idea that someone might sacrifice themselves to the cause was inherently more difficult for someone outside the movement to understand than someone inside. That martyrdom was understandable shows how dedicated the rank and file of both the WSPU and NWP were to the cause. Sacrifice on the scale of Emily Wilding Davison or Inez Milholland is something that cannot be entered into without belief. At the same time, it is hard for people to accept the reasoning for such sacrifice if they do not understand the belief of those who died. Martyrs often play a part in forming communal identities.² The deaths of both of these women solidified to many militant suffragists what their organizations stood for, and reinforced the sense of community that was built around those beliefs.

The fact that women were not only willing to become martyrs, but that other women in the cause endorsed their actions shows that connection with the militant suffrage movement often went beyond a mere association. Militancy played a large part in how WSPU and NWP members defined their identity. Much of the work about the political power of martyrs like *The Politics of Martyrdom* by Valerie Rosoux, talks about the importance of creating martyrs to creating a national identity.³ The martyrdoms of Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland reinforced the way that members of the NWP and WSPU viewed themselves and their organizations. To militant suffragists who felt disenfranchised by nations that would not acknowledge their rights, their suffrage organizations were akin to their nation. If “The principle of supreme sacrifice justifies the transcendent character of the nation” than it stands to reason

² Valerie Rosoux, “The Politics of Martyrdom,” in *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology and Politics of Self-Sacrifice*, edited by Rona M. Fields (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 86.

³ Rosoux, 86.

that the suffragettes would see their martyrs much in the way the French might see Joan of Arc or the any other nation might view their patron saint.⁴

The bonds created through the shared experiences and ideals of the militancy built an identity and community among these women that transcended all other characteristics or relations. The dedication of these women was something like patriotism in order for them to feel so strongly about their connection to militancy. The creation of martyrs by both militant suffrage groups not only reinforced the communal identity of militant suffragists, but strengthened it in both the United States and Great Britain. However, the way in which a martyr impacted the WSPU and NWP differed in ways that reflected the fundamental differences in the circumstances of the two organizations. The martyrdoms of Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland fulfilled inverse needs for the militant suffrage movement. Inez Milholland's death was an event that the NWP could unify their members around, whereas the death of Emily Wilding Davison was the confirmation of the ideas the WSPU had already built their communal identity around.

The death of Emily Wilding Davison was in many ways was the embodiment of the intense commitment British women had to their tactics. Over years, the WSPU built a community around the idea that women had to act aggressively in order to obtain their rights. The Pankhursts would frequently comment on the fact that British history often involved some sort of revolt in order for change to be made. When reflecting on the militant campaign Emmeline Pankhurst stated "We were willing to break laws that we might force men to give us the right to make laws. That is the way men have earned their citizenship."⁵

⁴ Rosoux, 85.

⁵ Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (New York: Hearst's International Library, 1914), 188.

The suffragettes were a revolutionary army, the fact that the government would often react to them with abuse the fact further proved that they were at war. The idea that WSPU soldiers were suffering and even dying for the betterment of all, gave their conflict a transcendent quality which kept women enthralled with the organization and their tactics. Davison's actions confirmed that in order to reach their lofty goal WSPU members must be willing to make sacrifices, as others had before them. Her death proved that the ideology that served as the foundation for WSPU was valid, and that the people who saw themselves as part of the community of militants were following the path that would win women the vote. In their thinking, it was inevitable that blood would be spilled in the course of their conflict, and the death of a member was likely. Davison's death was the toll that had to be paid in order for women to gain the franchise.

In the United States in the 1910's the suffrage movement had already gained more substantial traction and success than in Great Britain. Some states and territories had already given women the right to vote by the time of Inez Milholland's death in 1916. As explored, earlier the reason to act in a militant fashion was not as obvious in the United States because women some had the right to vote, and the level of animosity between women and the government was significantly less than it was between British militants and their government. The fact that the same level of animosity did not exist between the NWP and the government made it less clear why militant action should take place. Inez Milholland's death gave the NWP a figure around which they could build a community focused on using militant tactics to make sure that Milholland did not die in vain. The martyrdom provided the NWP with a sense of stakes from which a militant campaign could be entered.

Many areas of the relationship between martyrdom and the militant suffrage movement still need to be explored. The reason why martyrs played such an important role in militant suffrage movements, as opposed to the suffrage movement as a whole is a topic worth continued academic work. As is the effectiveness of suffrage martyrs among the general public. What is clear is that the deaths of Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland were defining events in the militant suffrage movement of Great Britain and the United States that both the WSPU and NWP used to great effect.

Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland were important symbols for militant suffrage movements at different stages in their development. However, the existence of suffrage martyrs shows how powerful the ties of militant communities were on both sides of the Atlantic. The creation of martyrs played a part in defining the nature of the cause for militants in both the United States and Great Britain. The deaths of Emily Wilding Davison and Inez Milholland allowed the NWP and WSPU to crystalize who they were both for those already involved and invested in the cause, as well as those who might question their motives. When these martyrs were created militants had great attention on them and had to put forward a clear idea as to who they were and why sacrifice was necessary. Both of these deaths represent a clear distillation of how the militants in each country defined their cause, and why they felt it was worth risking everything for. Neither the WSPU nor the NWP could have become the organizations that they were without the dedication of their members. The extent of that dedication is explained most clearly at the points that women truly gave everything that they could for the right to vote.

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Emily Wilding Davison, c. 1908. Emily is depicted in the portrait wearing her graduation robes, having studied at both Holloway (now Royal Holloway) college and St Hugh's Hall, Oxford. In November 1906 the Women's Social and Political Union enrolled Emily Davison. She was thirty-four years old and employed as governess to the four children of Sir Francis Layland-Barratt, the Liberal MP for Torquay and High Sheriff for Cornwall. Emily was soon involved in Suffragette militant demonstrations. In the afternoon of 30 March 1909, Dora Marsden, carrying a tricolour flag, led a deputation of twenty-nine women, Emily among them, to see Herbert Asquith at the House of Commons, although he had refused to meet them. By the time she graduated from college in 1909, Inez Milholland was on her way to being nationally famous. Grand Marshal Inez Milholland Boissevain (1886 - 1916) leads a parade of 30,000 representatives of the various Women's Suffrage associations through New York City on May 3, 1913. Paul Thompson Getty Images. By Joanna Scutts. Download Citation on ResearchGate | In the thick of the fight: The writing of emily wilding davison, militant suffragette | One of the most memorable images of the British women's suffrage movement occurred on June 4, Derby Day, 1913. As the field of horses approached a turning at Epsom, militant suffragette Emily Wilding Davison ducked out from under the railing and ran onto the track, reaching