

Is it Suffragist or Suffragette?



Although the terms suffragist and suffragette are often used as though they mean the same thing, their historical meanings are quite different.

The terms suffrage and enfranchisement mean having the right to vote. Suffragists are people who advocate for enfranchisement. After African American men got the vote in 1870 with the passage of the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution, “suffrage” referred primarily to votes for women.

The battle for woman’s suffrage was in full force in both Britain and the United States in the early 1900s. In 1906, a British journalist used the word “suffragette” to mock those fighting for women’s right to vote. The suffix “-ette” refers to something small or diminutive, and the reporter used it to minimize the work and goals of British suffragists. Some women in Britain adopted the term suffragette as a way of reclaiming it from its derogatory use.

In the United States, however, the term suffragette was seen as offensive and not embraced by the suffrage movement. Instead, it was wielded by anti-suffragists in their fight to deny women in America the right to vote.

Source: National Park Service
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/suffragistvsuffragette.htm>

