

Ida's Dream

This past week, our nation celebrated the sacrificial work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King gave his life for the cause of Civil Rights. In one of the most famous and impactful speeches of all time, Dr. King challenged our nation: "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal." Reverend King's 1963 speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial followed his proposal of a bill to Congress, requesting legislation that would provide "the kind of equality of treatment which we would want for ourselves." His effective, peaceful protest helped align our nation with its creed.

A young woman named Ida also had a dream. She dreamed that women in America would have equal rights as men. Although we are equal in the eyes of the Lord, the culture of the time was male-dominated. Women didn't have the



right to vote, hold office, or be treated equally to men. Ida was born 11 years after the birth of the women's rights movement (1848 convention held in Seneca Falls, New York). Ida became a champion in the women's rights movement beginning in the 1890s. With the full support of her husband, she dedicated her life to the cause. At a time when most women were relegated to the home, Ida spent three decades working full-time for the suffrage movement. She traveled the country, standing up for her beliefs. She appeared at the speaker's podium side by side with Susan B. Anthony and other giants of the movement. Like Dr. King, Ida interacted with Congress, speaking to a US House of Representatives committee to advocate for women's rights. She made keynote speeches at national and state conventions in at least 14 states. Ida established and managed suffrage offices around the country, living in the areas where she campaigned for years at a time, sometimes out of her own pocket.

One newspaper described her as "an accomplished diplomat with a placid and innocent expression...Her piety of looks makes her popular at religious gatherings, but she is quite equal to bringing down the house between the acts of a 25-cent vaudeville show."¹ She won people over with kindness, logic, humor, and conviction. When she spoke to large groups who opposed the movement, she left them "clamoring for more" when she finished her presentation. They knew she was right. Even though her cause went against the grain, she was not considered a "radical." Ida participated in occasional peaceful freedom marches in solidarity with the movement but always treated people with love and respect. She was a prolific writer, serving as press secretary for the suffrage movement and persistently communicating with hundreds of newspapers. She worked tirelessly as she conducted door-to-door petition drives, delivered lectures, distributed campaign materials, and lobbied legislators for change. The Bible reminds us, *And let us not grow weary of*



Ida Porter Boyer (standing) at the Boston League of Women Voters office. Photo was published in a Boston newspaper in 1920.

¹ The Potter Enterprise, September 1912, Pottsville, Pennsylvania

doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9).

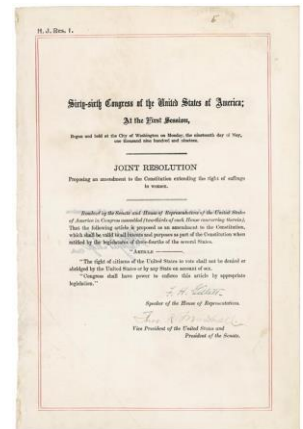
It took 72 years and several generations of suffrage workers to overcome the resistance of males who wanted to protect their authority and power. Ida helped push the movement over the finish line and lived to experience a defining moment in our nation's history -- the passage of the 19th Amendment on August 18, 1920.

Ida's full name was Ida Porter Boyer. In addition to aligning the culture of a nation to its founding ideals, one of the objectives of any civil and human rights movement is to make the world better for future generations. I was too young to remember if I ever met my great-grandmother in the final years of her life, but Ida inspired future generations of our family and still does today. The 1920 picture that appears in this devotion is Ida Porter Boyer (standing), showing her grandson the map of the United States. The little boy in the photograph is my dad, witnessing the marking of Tennessee as the 36th and final state needed to ratify the 19th Amendment.²

My questions are: What are you doing to improve your community or the nation for future generations? Are you advocating for important causes you know are God's Will? What injustices are you trying to correct? How have you inspired your family to seek God's will?

The Bible Says: *Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will (Romans 12:2).*

Prayer: Heavenly Father. There are injustices that need correcting in our communities, nation, and world. Guide me as I seek to do my part to help align the world in which we live with Your Will. Amen.



Written by Bruce Porter Boyer
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² Much of the research for this article is from [Ida Porter Boyer: Schuylkill County's Forgotten Suffragist](#), by J.R. Zane. Pictures included in this devotion are from the Boyer family archives and family genealogy maintained by Carol Porter Boyer Mueller.