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Film Review

Iron Jawed Angels More Given a Vote

"Mr. President, How Long Must Women Wait For Liberty." This single statement is justified in the movie Iron Jawed Angels that depicts the National Woman's Party (NWP) efforts in achieving the woman's right to vote. The NWP was founded by Alice Paul (Hilary Swank). The film begins with Miss Paul and Lucy Burns (Frances O'Connor) coming back to the United States from England where they have been actively involved in the suffrage movement. The suffrage movement in England was more rowdy and very "hooligan-like" as they put it in the film and so Miss Paul and Miss Burns needed the approval from the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) to go to Washington D.C. Nevertheless, they soon realized that their ideas were much too radical for the refined NAWSA, mostly Carrie Chapman Catt (Anjelica Huston). Both Miss Paul and Miss Burns eventually left NAWSA and created the NWP, a much more modern organization dedicated to the fight for women's rights.

Throughout time, tension grows between the NWP and NAWSA and NAWSA leaders such as Carrie Chapman Catt criticizes NWP's tactics. She directs disgust toward the NWP protest of a wartime President (Woodrow Wilson) and picketing directly outside the White House. Relations between the White House and the NWP protesters also gotten worse, as hundreds of women are arrested for their actions but for the official charge of "obstructing traffic." The arrested suffragists were given a choice of paying 10 dollars or being sent to prison for 60 days. However, the public was unaware that the women suffered poor conditions. When many women were being arrested, Miss Paul decided to picket alongside a senator's wife Emily Leighton (Molly Parker) and other women and when they were arrested, they underwent a hunger strike. Consequently, prison authorities force-fed them milk and raw eggs through a tube. News of this ill-treatment leaked out to the media through Mrs. Leighton's

husband a senator. Because of the ill-treatment, the media referred to these women as the 'Iron Jawed Angels.' It then turns out that pressure is put on President Wilson as NAWSA seizes the opportunity to lobby tirelessly for the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution and the movie ends with Miss Paul celebrating with the women of NWP. It is stated in caption at the end of the movie that the Supreme Court rules that the arrests were, in fact, unconstitutional.

The movie takes place during the early 20th century when woman suffrage was on the table of discussion besides World War I. The movie covers the creation of NWP and to what extent it took women to gain a political representation in the United States in order to vote. The movie focused mainly on Alice Paul and the actions of the NWP, but the film did cover pieces of Carrie Chapman Catt, someone who was around when Susan B. Anthony was steering heading women's rights. The film, I thought was on point with historical accuracy because told the story of the women who picketed the government and then were mistreated. Another example of historical accuracy would include how the NAWSA pushed Woodrow Wilson to allow women the right to vote, but the movie rather hinted that the NWP really changed the president's mind, but the NWP's cause did, but NAWSA took ownership of establishing the 19th amendment. Another crucial example that covers historical accuracy would be when Inez Milholland (Julia Ormond) rode on a white horse for the 1913 march that Miss Paul created in an effort for women's rights. However, in the movie version the wings were added as a symbolic gesture of justice and liberty of an angel.

Overall, the movie depicts a riveting time and movement in U.S. history and captures what most movies surpass and that is historical accuracy. I would say I learned much more about women's suffrage through this movie than compiling my own research and trying to memorize each detail. Therefore, I believe that is why that movies based on history facts and truth are easier to understand because it helps many people including myself to see historical events visually instead of reading about them. Iron

Jawed Angels truly opened my eyes to what extent it took for women to be granted a vote to contribute to society. After watching the movie I can now appreciate voting so much more and I understand better what it could be like if I did not have the right to vote in my country.