

News story: Historic statue of suffragist leader Millicent Fawcett unveiled in Parliament Square

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- Statue unveiled in a ceremony attended by Prime Minister Theresa May, Communities Secretary Sajid Javid, campaigner Caroline Criado Perez and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan

A statue of suffragist leader Millicent Fawcett has been unveiled in Parliament Square in a ceremony attended by the Prime Minister, Communities Secretary Sajid Javid and the Mayor of London today (24 April 2018).

Following Caroline Criado Perez's campaign, the Mayor of London commissioned Turner Prize-winning artist Gillian Wearing OBE to create the statue. It is funded through the government's £5 million Centenary Fund and is the first-ever monument of a woman, and the first created by a woman, to stand within the square.

Marking 100 years since some women won the right to vote, the statue was unveiled by 3 generations of women – Jennifer Loehnis, a descendant of Millicent Fawcett; campaigner and activist Caroline Criado Perez; Deputy Mayor for Culture and Creative Industries, Justine Simons; and 2 schoolgirls, from Millbank Academy in Westminster, and Platanos College, Lambeth.

Prime Minister, Theresa May, said:

I would not be here today as Prime Minister, no female MPs would have taken their seats in Parliament, none of us would have the rights and protections we now enjoy, were it not for Dame Millicent Garrett Fawcett.

The struggle to achieve votes for women was long and arduous and Dame Millicent was there from the beginning. For decade after decade, in the face of often fierce opposition, she travelled the country and the world, campaigning not just for the vote but on a whole range of issues.

I want to thank Gillian Wearing for creating a beautiful and fitting tribute to Dame Millicent and to everyone involved in making this happen.

For generations to come, this statue will serve not just as a reminder of Dame Millicent's extraordinary life and legacy, but as inspiration to all of us who wish to follow in her footsteps.

Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, said:

Today's unveiling is a landmark moment, a celebration of the legacy of the women that fought tirelessly for equal rights and transformed our nation for the better.

The statue of Millicent Fawcett, now facing Parliament, will remind us all of how we must keep up the fight against inequality and injustice in everything we do.

Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said:

Today is an historic day. Finally, Parliament Square is no longer a male-only zone for statues. From the very first week of my Mayoralty, I supported Caroline Criado Perez's campaign to put up a statue of a woman in Parliament Square, and I'm so proud that the day of its unveiling is now upon us.

This statue of Millicent Fawcett, the great suffragist leader, will stand near Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela – 2 other heroic leaders who campaigned for change and equality. There couldn't be a better place to mark the achievements of Millicent Fawcett, in the heart of UK democracy in Parliament Square.

I hope this statue sparks further change across society – driving forward gender equality and inspiring women and girls across the capital and the UK. My huge thanks to Caroline, for her passionate campaigning and to Gillian Wearing – who has brought Millicent Fawcett and her legacy to life through this magnificent work.

Caroline Criado Perez also spoke at the ceremony, talking about her campaign for the statue, which included a change.org petition signed by almost 85,000 people. Following the endorsement of the campaign from both the Prime Minister and the Mayor, the Suffrage Statue Commission selected Turner Prize-winning artist Gillian Wearing to create a statue of suffragist leader Millicent Fawcett.

Artist, Gillian Wearing OBE, said:

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked on this sculpture and plinth. It was so heart-warming to see the care and attention that went into the work. I can only say I am truly grateful.

I hope those viewing the work will be able to appreciate this along with being able to celebrate Millicent Fawcett along with all the other suffrage supporters and activists also honoured.

Campaigner, Caroline Criado Perez OBE, said:

When I went for a run in Parliament Square two years ago and first noticed that all the statues there were of men I could never have imagined quite how perfectly the dream would eventually be realised.

Gillian Wearing's design is everything I could ever have wanted – and more – for the first statue of a woman in Parliament Square.

I'm so grateful to everyone who worked so hard on this campaign to make this happen. It's been a brilliant team effort, and one I'm so proud to have played a part in.

The statue unveiling is one of the many events taking place this year to celebrate the centenary year of suffrage. The Government Equalities Office has allocated £5 million to mark the centenary of voting rights for women in 2018. This fund will support projects that raise awareness of this crucial milestone, educate young people about its significance, and inspire people to build a diverse political system that reflects the nation it serves.

So far, over £600,000 has been awarded from the Women's Votes Centenary Grant Scheme to standout schemes across the country, including projects that train women to become leaders in their communities, and events that celebrate the lives of prominent suffragettes.

The unveiling of the Millicent Fawcett statue is a major event in the Mayor of London's [#BehindEveryGreatCity](#) campaign, which celebrates the role of women in the capital. Alongside Fawcett, the names and portraits of 59 women and men who campaigned for women's suffrage are inscribed on the plinth.

The unveiling ceremony was presented by BBC broadcaster Mishal Husain and featured poet Theresa Lola, performances from the cast of *Sylvia* and the Suffragist Singers and an adaptation of Millicent Fawcett's 1918 Victory Speech* by award-winning actress, Helen McCrory OBE.

The statue was commissioned by the Mayor of London with 14-18 NOW, Firstsite and Iniva to commemorate the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918, through the government's national centenary fund.

To mark the day of the statue unveiling, Google Arts & Culture is collaborating with its creator, the artist Gillian Wearing and the Mayor of London to show the spirit and stories of the suffrage campaigners on a new online platform at g.co/roadtoequality.

*Adapted for a transcript of Millicent Fawcett's Victory speech in March 1918

published in The Common Cause (Newspaper first published in 1909, that supported the policies of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, "the organ of the women's movement for reform'.) Looking Backwards, by Mrs. Henry Fawcett

Previous press releases

Background on government's centenary fund

In 2017, the government announced a £5 million Centenary fund to coincide with International Women's Day.

To date, £1.2 million has been awarded to 7 Centenary Cities and towns in England with a strong suffrage history to help inspire a new generation with the legacy of women's campaign for equal representation. Manchester has chosen to spend a portion of their funding to commemorate Emmeline Pankhurst, as only the second woman alongside Queen Victoria, to be represented with a statue in the city. The 7 Centenary Cities are Bolton, Bristol, Leeds, Leicester, London, Manchester, and Nottingham.

In February, the Minister for Women and Equalities Amber Rudd announced £1.5 million would make up a Women's Suffrage Centenary Grant Scheme for bids of up to £125,000 for projects running throughout the centenary year to encourage communities to celebrate and to help make modern politics more accessible. Over 600,000 has been awarded to stand out scheme across the country including projects that train women to become leaders in their communities, and events that celebrate the lives of prominent suffragettes.

A new [Celebrating Votes for Women](#) web page will help people find out more about getting involved in centenary events through the year. The page includes links to information about the history of the suffrage movement and details of how to apply for a grant, as well as an events hub to show what is happening across the country.