

**Presentation of Freedom Pin
to National Woman's Party
by Sonia Pressman Fuentes**

**Washington, D.C.
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Good evening. I am here tonight to talk about this pin which I am holding in the palm of my hand. This pin is a part of the history of women in this country. Therefore, I think it is fitting that I tell you some of its history.

This pin originally belonged to a suffragist named Betsy Graves Reyneau. Mrs. Reyneau, whose grandfather was Chief Justice of the Michigan State Supreme Court, was in the first group of six women arrested on Bastille Day, July 14, 1917, for picketing the White House with banners reading, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." Sixteen women were arrested that day, booked for "Unlawful Assembly," and sentenced to 60 days in the Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia for "Obstructing Traffic."

Those 16 women were pardoned by the President after three days, but subsequent suffragist pickets imprisoned at Occoquan were subjected to inhumane treatment for longer periods of time, including force feeding when they went on hunger strikes.

In December 1917, a mass meeting was held to honor 81 suffragists who had served time in the District Jail or the Occoquan Workhouse. On that occasion, a silver pin in the shape of a prison cell door with a chain across was presented to each "Prisoner of Freedom." That pin was designed by Alice Paul and was based on the "Holloway Broach." Holloway Prison in England, where the British suffragists had been jailed, had a portcullis at the entrance; that's an iron grating which is hung over a

gateway and lowered between grooves to prevent passage. Sylvia Pankhurst had designed a broach for the British suffragists in the shape of that portcullis. After Alice Paul was jailed in England, she was given a Holloway Broach, and that formed the basis for her design of the pin later given to the American suffragists.

I am aware of the existence of only 3 of the 81 original Freedom Pins today. One of them is on display in the permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum of American History called "From Parlor to Politics: Women and Reform in America." The woman who created that exhibit is here tonight: Edith Mayo, curator of that museum's Division of Political History. The second pin is part of the research collection of that museum, and the third is here tonight.

Mrs. Reyneau, the original owner of this pin, who was white, went on to become a distinguished painter of Black leaders. After her death, her daughter gave the pin to Mrs. Reyneau's friend -- and mine -- the late Reverend Dr. Pauli Murray. Pauli, was a feminist, civil rights activist, writer, poet, lawyer, educator, and the first Black woman Episcopal minister in the United States. After she received the pin, Pauli began the tradition of presenting it to a deserving feminist, who would wear it for a time, after which Pauli would present it to another feminist.

The first contemporary feminist to receive this pin was Aileen Hernandez, first woman Commissioner of the Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission and the first president of NOW. She was followed by the late Elizabeth Duncan Koontz, the first Black woman director of the U.S. Women's Bureau. Then, it was worn by two women who are here tonight: Catherine East, executive director of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women and the Commission on International Women's Year, and Mary Eastwood, feminist lawyer and founding member of NOW and Human Rights for Women. Then, I had the privilege of wearing it; and, finally, it was given to Jane Picker, founder of the Cleveland Women's Law Center.

In 1985, Pauli Murray died, and Mary Eastwood, Catherine East and I learned that the pin was part of her estate. With the executors' approval, we decided to present it to the National Woman's Party. It is thus my great pleasure to present this pin for display at the Sewall-Belmont House to my dear friend, Mary Eastwood, president of the National Woman's Party.