

Young Portrait Explorers: Belva Ann Lockwood



Learning Objective: Learn about Belva Lockwood’s contribution to American history.

Portrait Discussion:

Take 30 seconds to look at this portrait of Belva Lockwood. Pay attention to the object in her hand and how she is dressed.

Object: Find the object in Belva Lockwood’s hand. What is it?

*The object in Belva Lockwood’s is a piece of paper, most likely an **honorary degree** (a certificate given to someone from a university that is not a student but has done something important). For Belva Lockwood, this honorary degree was not only a sign of her intellect, but also a symbol that women and people of color could do everything and more that white men could do.*

Dress: What is Belva Lockwood wearing? Are these pieces of clothing something that you wear every day? *The piece of clothing that Belva Lockwood is wearing is called an **academic gown**. Similar to the gowns that high school and college students wear to graduation, an academic gown is a formal piece of clothing worn by those who have obtained a university degree, real or honorary.*

How do you think Belva Lockwood feels in her academic gown? Smart? Powerful? Happy?

Activity:

How does clothing make you feel? Find a piece of clothing in your closet that makes you feel happy; another that makes you feel smart. *The artist portrays Belva Lockwood in an academic gown to tell us that Belva Lockwood was a smart, professional, and respected woman.*

Historical Context:

When Belva Lockwood was alive, women and people of color were not treated fairly. She fought for equal rights, sometimes by gathering friends and marching in the streets. She was a lawyer and even ran for President of the United States twice, promising to help people who were denied their rights.

Related Children’s Book:

Ballots for Belva by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen

Art Activity: “When I am President”

Materials:

Markers/crayons/colored pencils
“When I am President” template
Photo of participant (optional)
Glue stick (optional)

Instruction:

Belva Lockwood ran for president twice, promising to help people who were denied their rights. Now it’s your turn to campaign for president. What would you do as president? Create your own poster and write down what laws you would put in place.



Belva Ann Bennett Lockwood by Nellie Mathes Horne, 1913. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; transfer the Smithsonian American Art Museum; gift of the Committee for "A Tribute to Mrs. Belva Ann Lockwood" through Mrs. Anna Kelton Wiley, 1917.

Find the portrait on our website, here: https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.66.61



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