



LADIES IN THE HOUSE
PODCAST SERIES

MOAD

Museum of Australian Democracy
at Old Parliament House



LADIES IN THE HOUSE EPISODE 2: GAY DAVIDSON

Lesson Plan

Learning Intention:

Understand the link between journalism and politics in representing democracy.

Success Criteria:

Reflect on the importance of diversity in the fields of both journalism and politics.

Before Listening:

Activity One:

Pre-Listening
Vocabulary

Write up or project the
following words on the board:

- democracy
- bureau
- prestigious
- glass ceilings
- cadetship



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Activity

One:

Pre-Listening Vocabulary

In groups ask the students if they can put the words into one of the 4 categories.

- Don't know it at all
- Have seen or heard, but don't know the meaning
- I think I know the meaning
- I know the meaning and can explain it

If any of the students are in the 3rd or 4th category, see if they can explain it to the people in your group or to the class.

Share the following definitions for the vocabulary.

Definitions:

- **Democracy** is a system of government in which people choose their rulers by voting for them in elections.
- A **bureau** is an office, organisation, or government department that collects and distributes information.
- A **prestigious** institution, job, or activity is respected and admired by people.
- When people refer to a **glass ceiling**, they are talking about the attitudes and traditions in a society that prevent women from rising to the top jobs.
- A **cadetship** is a training program that helps people to learn the skills of a job by learning from experience.



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Activity

Two:

Before listening
discussion
questions

1. What kind of important decisions do you think that politicians make in parliament?

2. Not everyone can go to Canberra to listen in on the decision making in parliament. How do you think that the public are made aware of the things that go on in parliament?

After Listening:

Activity

Three:

After listening
reflection
questions

1. What are some of the many diverse groups that exist in Australia? (Cultural groups, gender, disability, etc.)

2. Historically, the fields of both journalism and politics have lacked both cultural and gender diversity. Why do you think it is important to have diversity in both politicians and with journalists? (Think about whose perspective is being represented in parliament and the media.)



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Activity Four:

Take action on
current issues

Brainstorm, as many issues as you can that are impacting on society. (Think about diversity, cultural representation, environmental issues, animal issues, junk food, sustainability and recycling, rubbish, graffiti, traffic congestion, health issues, mobile phone use etc.)

Choose one of these issues. In pairs or individually write a 1-2minute news story that brings awareness to your chosen issue.

You can structure the story in the following way:

1. Briefly introduce the topic- use strong language to catch the audience's attention.
2. Explain 1-2 issues that are happening around the topic- you can use quotes from experts
3. Suggest an action that the audience can take to help fight this issue.

The news story can be presented in a variety of ways.

- A podcast or radio broadcast
- A short video
- A written article 150-300 words



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Episode Transcript:

Hi, this is Kelly Chase and you are listening to a Museum of Australian Democracy and History Detective Collaboration: Ladies in the House. In this 3-part series we are going to celebrate the lives of three incredible women who worked in Old Parliament House- the building that now houses the Museum of Australian Democracy- and we will explore how these significant women contributed to Australian democracy.

In this episode I would like to introduce you to journalist Gay Davidson, who was the first woman to become a political correspondent for a large city newspaper publication in Australia, the first woman to head a **bureau (or department)** in Parliament House and the first female president of the prestigious National Press Club. She knew how to smash the **glass ceilings** that were obstacles for women in the workplace!

Journalism plays an important role in democracy. If the public are not aware of what is going on in parliament, then they don't know who to vote for. If you ever see a picture of the chambers in Parliament House, the Press Gallery is that narrow balcony right behind the speaker's chair where journalists can hear political debates firsthand and have the scoop about what to report on in their newspapers. Old photos generally show the balcony packed with men, but there was one trailblazing woman who helped to pave the way for other female political journalists, and that was Gay Davidson.

Gay, was born in New Zealand where she completed a **cadetship** in journalism before moving to Australia in the late 1960s. There she got a job at the Canberra Times covering issues on education before securing a position in the Press Gallery at Parliament House. If you have ever visited the Museum of Democracy at Old Parliament House, you will probably remember the glorious Senate or House of Representatives chambers with their plush leather seats and warm wooden fixtures, but you may not have seen the kitsch black and white tiled corridors that the journalists used to scurry through on their way to the balconies from their cramped offices and sound proof recording studios. In 1975, Gay became the first female head of bureau for the Canberra Times. That means she was the manager of all of the Canberra Times journalists working in the building.



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Now one quirky thing that Gay is famous for, is her liberation of the toilets. You see way back in 1923 when Parliament House was built, only one woman had ever been elected into parliament over in Western Australia and so the plumbing of the building was designed for mainly men- this shows us how unlikely they thought it was that women could be politicians. As times changed and more women started working in the building, they had to walk great distances to use the bathroom. However, Gay sought to change this, she staged a quiet protest, a “sit in” one could even say, by guarding the door as her female workmates used the much closer male toilet. The Sergeant at Arms recognised her mutiny and removed the word “men” from the door, thereby officially making it a unisex toilet.

Another one of Gay’s achievements was the first female president of the National Press Club. The Press Club is an organization made up of mainly journalists who invite members of parliament, scientists, sports figures and other influential people to speak at their lunches. These Press Club speeches are still aired on television every week.

Sadly, Gay’s teenage daughter died from complications from a disease called measles. Many people at the time dismissed measles as being a harmless childhood disease, but Gay used her political and journalism contacts to raise awareness of the dangers of measles. After this, another important job she held was to work for the Commonwealth Department of Health where she helped write and edit important papers on health and make sure they were in plain English so that everyday people could understand health issues.

Upon her induction into the Media Hall of Fame a fellow journalist said about her, “[Gay] knew an awful lot about health and health politics... [She] was a ... fine journalist in everything she did at The Canberra Times”.

A journalist finds stories on important issues that are happening around them and brings attention to those stories to try and make a difference in the world. I’m going to leave you with a few questions to think about. What issues are happening around you that you think are important? In our modern world, what would be the most effective way to bring attention to an issue that you think needs to be changed?

This is Kelly Chase, on the case.



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