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# Harriet Chalmers Adams's Women's War: France, 1916

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## Abstract

In March 1916, American explorer, traveler, lecturer and writer Harriet Chalmers Adams wrote to National Geographic Society president Gilbert H. Grosvenor with two proposals. First, she hoped to interest Grosvenor, for whom she had written six articles for National Geographic Magazine, in a lecture on Chile for the Society's Fall 1916 season. Second, she requested funding for an expedition to Kano, Nigeria. Grosvenor demurred on the request for a lecture date and declined the funding appeal. Just days earlier, Adams had attended a lecture on the topic of Central Africa, with the lecture's proceeds going to a relief organization in France. When her own plan for an African expedition failed, she seized upon a new focus for a lecture tour. By mid-June, Adams was finalizing plans to go to France under the auspices of the American Fund for French Wounded (AFFW). She would collect materials, including photographs, for a U.S. lecture tour on France to raise money for the organization (perhaps best known today for being the group for which Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas worked). Adams's experience in France also resulted in a National Geographic bulletin, "Women of France," featured in various U.S. newspapers from late October through December 1916, and an article in National Geographic Magazine after the U.S. entry into the war, in late 1917. Based on archival material and analysis of Adams's articles, this paper argues that Adams's French war experience, shaped by both the situation of French women that she documents in her National Geographic articles, and by the women-led AFFW, heightened and expanded her feminism, informing her post-war association with Pan-American feminists and as the first president of the Society of Woman Geographers.

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