

**CITIZEN
WOMAN**

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**AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY
OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

CITIZEN WOMAN

JANE GERHARD AND DAN TUCKER

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United States, 1920



The triumphant cover of the December 4, 1920 issue of *The Woman Citizen*, celebrating the August 26 ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

Women's history is
the primary tool for
women's emancipation.

Gerda Lerner

One is not born,
but rather becomes,
a woman.

Simone de Beauvoir
The Second Sex

Introduction

The right to vote is one that most of us take for granted. Many of us exercise it only occasionally, and we feel that we're performing a civic virtue when we do so. Today, this is as true for women in most of the world as it is for men. But this was not always so. Having a say in the way we are governed, however small, seems to us such a basic human right that even though we know there was a long-ago struggle to achieve suffrage for women—exactly a century ago for the United States, and approximately that span for many European nations, Australia, and New Zealand—it seems to us now that women's suffrage (from the Latin *suffragium*, “to support”) was inevitable.

The pages of this book will show you otherwise. The transnational women's suffrage movement was full of dynamic and committed individuals who faced opposition from entrenched powers that used every means at their disposal to defeat them. Unlike us, looking back on their achievements today, suffragists had no idea whether or not they would succeed. Even the most optimistic among them had to take success as an article of faith; many early suffragists didn't live long enough to cast their first ballot.

Individual suffrage movements varied tremendously by culture, geography, and religion, yet they shared information and ideas to a degree that is surprising in a world where instantaneous communication was unknown. Suffrage organizations were beset by internal rifts, conflicting agendas, and uncertainty about tactics. Members committed terrible acts of betrayal caused by racial prejudice, class conflict, and religious differences. Yet they also achieved stunning feats of political organization and brilliant and audacious acts of civil disobedience. They showed mastery of the art of public discourse and public relations, and an uncanny knack for pulling the few levers of power that were available to them. Many went to extraordinary lengths to work for social justice, demonstrating remarkable ingenuity and drive to fight for rights and protections for those less fortunate than themselves.

Still, interesting as these stories may be, why should we bother to look back now?

In the age of Twitter feminism, it's more important than ever that feminists understand their

history. In order to be convincing, and to understand and digest the views of others, there is no substitute for being well informed. As we've learned from the seemingly sudden emergence of the so-called alt-right, there are signifiers hidden in plain sight. Today, white supremacists rarely don the white robes of the KKK; subtler cues of attire and other personal choices communicate solidarity to fellow members. Awareness of our history helps us recognize these signposts.

Moreover, the sad but oddly reassuring truth is that the arguments and tactics of those who have fought against the emancipation of women have varied little over time. To be an effective feminist, it's important to recognize and understand these strategies, and to see how they have been neutralized and defeated in cases where feminists have triumphed. In the words of the Austrian-American historian Gerda Lerner, one of the pioneers in the field of women's studies, "Women's history is the primary tool for women's emancipation."

Even more importantly, the events of the first decades of the twenty-first century have been stomach-churning illustrations of the fact that history is not linear, and that progress is not a one-way street. Women today face persecution around the world, in overtly oppressive regimes, war-torn nations, and in the wealthiest countries: acts of physical and sexual violence; intimidation; workplace harassment and unequal pay; and restrictions on women's bodies and reproduction. Even in 2020, there is no place on the planet where



Democratic congresswomen wore all white to President Donald Trump's State of the Union address on February 5, 2019, as a nod to the suffrage movement. As Representative Brenda Lawrence of Michigan stated, "Today we stand together wearing white in solidarity with the women of the suffrage movement who refused to take no for an answer." Wearing "suffragette white" first became a sartorial statement in the early twentieth century, as participants sought to create a recognizable public image. Purple, white, and yellow were the official colors of the suffrage movement, representing loyalty, purity, and hope. White dresses provided a visual contrast during parades and were also a defense against stereotypes that portrayed suffragists as overly masculine. Here, congresswomen respond to President Trump's acknowledgment of increasing numbers of women serving in Congress and participating in the workforce.

women are exempt from acts of violence simply for being women. An understanding of the conditions that brought us here is vital to improving them. Recognizing and appreciating the methods that women have used to bring about change allows us to implement and adapt the most effective approaches, and to draw on their strength and effectiveness as bedrocks of inspiration and faith.

One need only look to new laws regarding abortion and birth control in the United States and the worldwide effects of the global gag rule (a U.S. policy of revoking aid to any overseas health organization that provides information, referrals, or services for abortion, see p. 78) to understand that women are facing a new and powerful set of challenges. According to data from the World Economic Forum, women across the globe in 2018 had on average less than 70 percent of the access to economic, educational, and political opportunities that men did. In countries that are experiencing war, where women are especially vulnerable, women have about half the access to these opportunities that men do. Even in countries where women have opportunities for education that are close to equal to those of men, their economic opportunities and political empowerment lag well behind. In Iceland, the top-ranked country for gender parity, women still are at a 15 percent overall disadvantage in spite of their nearly equal access to educational opportunities.

Women's fight to gain the right to vote is genuinely compelling and inspiring, but it is only a part of

a much larger story—that of women's quest for full and equal citizenship. Our modern understanding of what it means to be a citizen is based on the twin ideas of equality and political power requiring the consent of the governed. Oppressed and marginalized groups have struggled to redefine and expand the concept of citizenship ever since Enlightenment thinkers introduced these ideas in the eighteenth century.

This book traces the themes that define citizenship for women, and it attempts to do so, somewhat quixotically, on a global basis. Perhaps for this reason, we've chosen to let pictures do a great deal of the storytelling for us. We did this not only for the dynamism and emotional impact that photographs, paintings, and other works of art bring to the subject, but because they also convey particularities of culture, dress, appearance, and other subtleties that enrich the story in ways that would otherwise take many pages of description. You are able to see at a glance the vast spectrum of circumstances in which women find themselves.

Additionally, the images afford us the opportunity to dig deeper by providing information specific to a time and place, and allow us to illustrate how the particular situation depicted in a photograph sheds light on a universal truth or an experience that is shared across vast expanses of time and geography. We've tried to convey this in extended captions.

The purpose is not to offer a comprehensive history of the women's movement in every country in the world, which would be impossible for a team of

scholars given a lifetime. Rather, the goal is to trace the issues that deeply affect the ways that women can exist in the world, and to highlight instances when women have fought to assert their claims to equal rights with men—not to become men, as some anti-feminists have argued rather sophistically, but to be able to live with the same autonomy and opportunities that men do.

The story of women achieving political rights is the subject of “To Have a Voice.” The right to vote—to have a say in how society is governed—is perhaps the first and most essential tool for achieving the other changes vital to women’s interests.

Birth control and abortion have been employed since ancient times to give women a degree of control over their lives by allowing them to choose when they will begin a family and the number of children they will have. “The Right to Choose” depicts the different ways in which these practices have been medicalized, demonized, and even criminalized, and how feminists have sought to ensure that women have both access to knowledge about birth control and abortion and the option to control their bodies.

Marriage and economic rights have always been a critical issue for women. “Out of the Doll’s House” looks at the evolution of marriage, and examines the significance of a woman’s right to choose a spouse and file for divorce, to own and trade property, and to represent herself in business and social transactions. Those rights, essential to the ability of women to live as equals of men before the law, have come about only after great struggle. In many areas of the world,

they are still subject to challenge. We look at the intersection of poverty and religion, and the way that the practices of child marriage and honor killings impact women.

“We Can Do It” delves into the lives of women as workers, whether in unremunerated jobs within the family home, or as maids, industrial workers, or business executives. The assumption that a good woman should live under the financial aegis and protection of a man has far outlived the reality in which that may have been possible for most people. As single-earner families have become increasingly rare, and situations where at least one parent must hold down multiple jobs have become the norm, feminists have worked to achieve equal opportunity to get jobs, receive equal pay for doing them, and work in environments free of harassment. Advocates for the rights of women have proposed childcare programs that are accessible and affordable, forging close ties between the labor and feminist movements.

Throughout modern history, women have been subject to control by male standards of beauty. Feminist artists and art critics are the heroes of “Eye of the Beholder,” as they have identified, challenged, and redefined depictions of women, and shown how beauty ideals have been used to manipulate them. In recent years, these feminists have begun to establish new norms of beauty and sexual attractiveness, ones that incorporate and resonate with women of color, transgender women, and other historically underrepresented groups. Activists have



Women in Kerala, southern India, gathered to form a human chain deemed a “women’s wall” on January 1, 2019. The human chain covered a total of 385 miles, and the government estimated that there were between three and a half and five million participants. Organized by the Left Democratic Front, the event was created to spread awareness about gender equality and to protest a ban that prohibited women of menstruating age from entering the Sabarimala Temple, an important Hindu religious site. India’s Supreme Court lifted this ban in September 2018, but several women were stopped outside by crowds of men. In Hinduism, menstruating women are viewed as impure and advised not to enter temples, but women have generally been allowed to visit Hindu religious sites while not menstruating. The massive turnout for the “women’s wall” on New Year’s Day inspired hope for the fight for gender equality in India.

also worked to stop body modification practices—such as female genital mutilation—seen in certain cultures to embody ideals of purity, and therefore, feminine beauty.

From its inception, the women’s movement has contained contradictions that are easily traced to economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. The issues that arise from these differences, with the tensions and conflicting agendas that they inevitably raise, are explored in “The Expanding Circle of Citizenship.” The first-wave suffrage movements tended to be organized and populated by women in the upper half of the economic spectrum, and they sometimes worked to the exclusion or even the detriment of women of color, working women, and lesbian and transgender women. But in recent decades, feminists have broadened their focus, recognizing that the oppression of one group has ramifications for all. The goal of feminists now is to expand the circle of citizenship, bringing once-marginalized groups under the umbrella of rights and protections to be enjoyed by all citizens in the fullest sense of the word.

So why look back at the history of the women’s movement? If you take the view from thirty thousand feet, it’s possible to see the discrete streams and individual cultural eddies that flow together and unite to form the great tidal movements on the planet. Informed activism by individuals and groups of individuals—even the

simple refusal to accept things the way they “have always been”—is what has succeeded in pushing the rights of full citizenship for women from the fringes to mainstream acceptability. In the words of the anthropologist Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

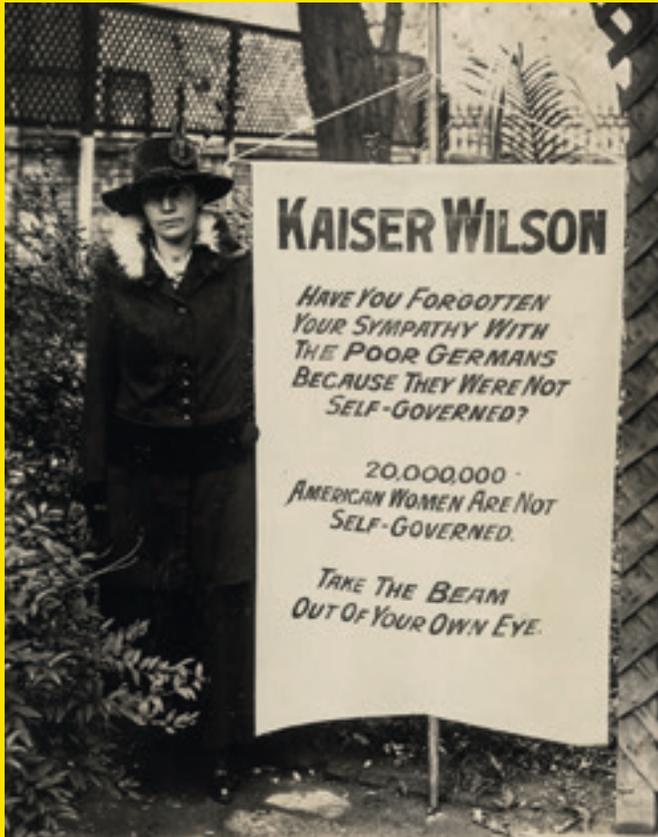
When the long struggle for the enfranchisement of women is over, those who read the history of the movement will wonder at the blindness that led the Government of the day to obstinately resist so simple and obvious a measure of justice.

Emmeline Pankhurst,
British suffragette

To Have a Voice

Perhaps the most surprising thing to modern readers about women's struggle for the right to vote is how widely and virulently disparaged suffrage was right up until it became the law. But over many decades in virtually every corner of the globe, it did become the law, first in New Zealand (1893) and Australia (1902), then in much of Scandinavia (1913–1915). The United Kingdom followed suit in 1918, as did Austria, Canada, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. Full suffrage arrived in Russia with the Revolution in 1917, a fact that American suffragists used to taunt “Kaiser” Woodrow Wilson to goad him into supporting “woman suffrage,” as it was then called. Congress finally passed the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, guaranteeing women the right to vote, in June 1919, It was ratified, in a true nail-biter, in August 1920.

United States, 1917



LEFT After years of meetings with President Woodrow Wilson that had failed to produce results, Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party (NWP) decided to "mak[e] it impossible for the President to enter or leave the White House without encountering a sentinel bearing some device pleading the suffrage cause," according to an article published in the *Washington Post* on January 10, 1917. This photograph, taken later in 1917, shows Virginia Arnold, a school-teacher from North Carolina who also served as executive secretary of the NWP. Arnold holds a banner needling Wilson for intervening on behalf of democratic principles in Germany but ignoring the same problem at home. The provocations by Paul's group eventually led to violence and arrests (see p. 28–29).

United States, 1913



LEFT, BELOW Inez Milholland Boissevain (1886–1916), wearing a white cape, sits astride a white horse at the National American Woman Suffrage Association parade in Washington, D.C. on March 3, 1913. The Brooklyn-born Milholland was a labor and children's rights attorney and served as a journalist and correspondent during World War I. Known for her ability to electrify crowds as much as for her progressive views, Milholland went on a nationwide speaking tour for the National Woman's Party in 1916 in spite of ill health. Milholland collapsed at the podium while delivering a suffrage speech in Los Angeles in the fall of 1916 and died several weeks later on November 25, 1916. Her death was front-page news, a shock to the nation and her fellow suffragists. She became a martyr and an icon of the suffrage movement.

RIGHT (United Kingdom, 1914) Police arrest Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928) on May 21, 1914 outside of Buckingham Palace, where she had organized a march to present a petition to King George V. Pankhurst was arrested another twelve times within the span of a year, serving a total of thirty days in prison. In response to increased militancy by Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) during this period, the British government pursued a catch-and-release policy known as the "Cat and Mouse Act," releasing suffrage prisoners after they were weakened from hunger strikes and re-arresting them after they had regained their strength. Pankhurst died several weeks before Parliament passed the Representation of the People Act in 1928, which extended suffrage to all women over twenty-one, but she had lived to celebrate the 1918 version of the Act, which had granted suffrage to women over thirty.



How could something that today seems so self-evidently a basic right have once been so controversial? This question is particularly vexing when applied to modern-era democracies, which were founded on notions of natural rights and an opposition to tyranny. The vast majority of newspaper coverage of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, widely viewed as the origin of the American woman's movement, was brutally negative. Why did champions of liberty presume, across all strata of society, that these principles did not apply to half the population?

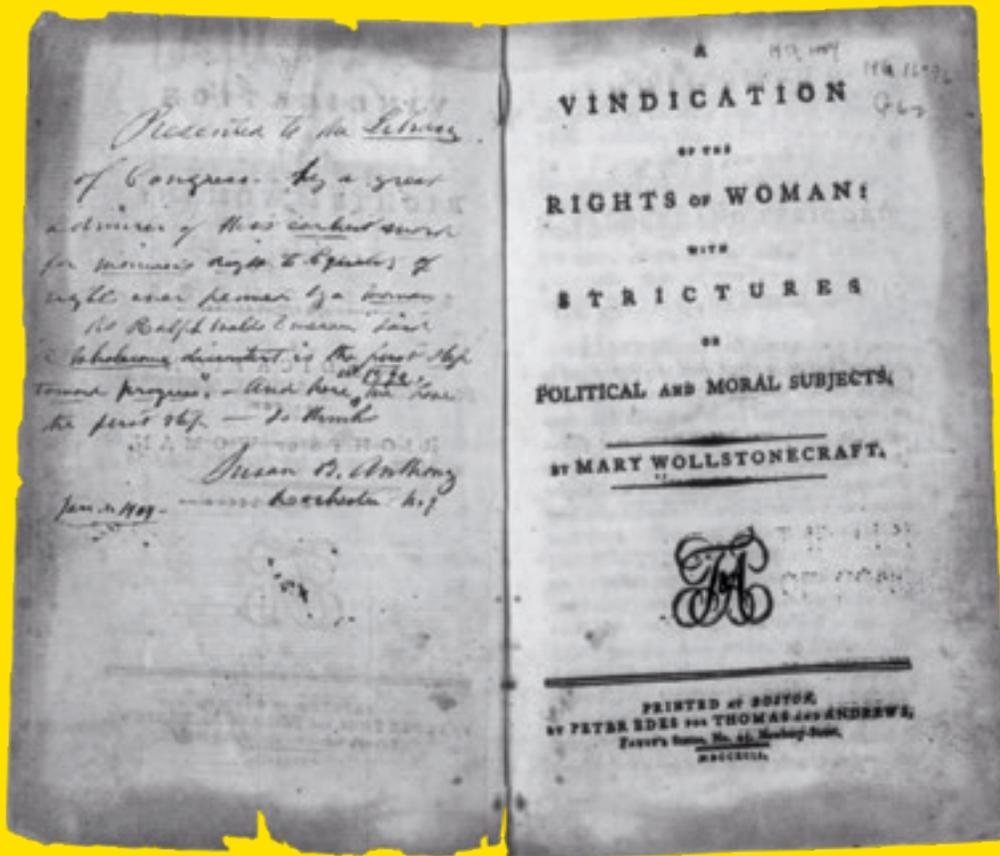
At the time of the American Revolution in the late eighteenth century, the idea of self-government, of authority originating with "the people"—let alone with women—was not yet a widely accepted idea. Moreover, the very thought of women as individuals, separate from their families, was so far removed from the laws and customs of the day as to have seemed a fantasy. European states operated under a system known as coverture (literally "covered" in French), in which women had no legal status. As "femes covert," or married women, English, and later American, women could not own property, make contracts, testify against their husbands in court, or engage in any legal transactions. Wives also took the surnames of their husbands, and were subject to their rule. Unmarried or widowed women faced uncertain, often precarious, status (see p. 122). European nations exported this system throughout the world through colonization and trade, including to their North American colonies. Nevertheless, in

the New World, many Native American societies, matrilineal in organization, viewed the status of women differently. They traced descent through the maternal line and consequently granted women more power in "public" or "political" life. Women had a meaningful voice in tribal councils (though male elders generally controlled these councils). The women of the Pawnee and Omaha of Nebraska, for example, had both property rights and the ability to initiate divorce. Still, in most of the world, including the Anglo colonies of America, women shared status as legal nonentities, with no formal political voice.

Mary Wollstonecraft had already broached the idea of granting women rights equal to those of men in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), and her proposal had largely been ridiculed. The idea of allowing women a voice in government seemed more radical yet, if not unnatural, in the new American Republic. Under the rules and unspoken customs of coverture, women's lives were properly confined to the domestic sphere of homemaking and child-rearing; though they were often important contributors to the family economy, women's authority generally ended where the making of important decisions began. The idea that women could participate in the public sphere demeaned their femininity and womanhood, the argument went, foreshadowing a refrain that echoes to this day.

Indeed, more than 150 years later, the argument that women have no place in the rough-and-tumble world of politics still had salience. Phyllis Schlafly

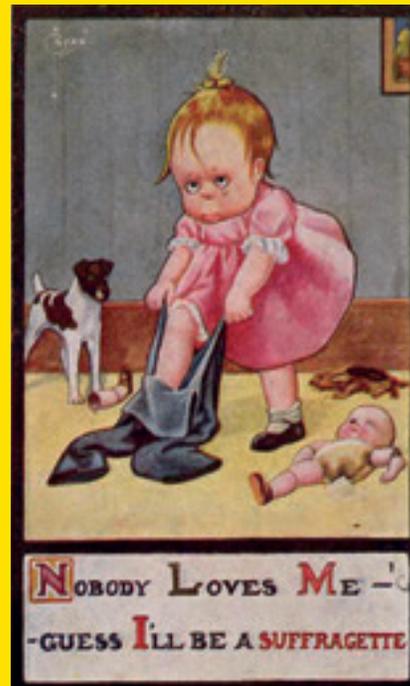
United States, 1904



United States, 1911

ABOVE Susan B. Anthony donated her personal copy of the first American edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) to the Library of Congress in 1904. Wollstonecraft's work, widely ridiculed in its day for its radical stance, anticipated the woman suffrage movement by fifty years, and the feminist movement by considerably more. Anthony's inscription reads "Presented to the Library of Congress by a great admirer of this earliest word for woman's right to Equality of Rights ever penned by a woman. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said 'a Wholesome discontent is the first step toward progress.'—And here, in 1892 [sic], we have the first step—to think."

RIGHT This anti-suffrage cartoon from 1911 upholds the stereotype that only undesirable women were interested in women's rights, further suggesting, by depicting a suffragist as a willful toddler, that their concerns are silly and immature. The girl is wearing a pink dress and putting on a pair of pants, implying that she intends to leave the feminine ideal behind. Cartoons like this one often indicated that suffragettes would no longer take care of their families or perform their household duties if they gained political rights.



and her supporters at the Eagle Forum, for instance, fired the opening salvo in their campaign to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment at the 1977 National Women's Conference in Houston by arousing fears that the codification of equal standing for women would result in the elimination of women's ability to be full-time homemakers and mothers. By treating women like men before the law, would there be an erosion of moral standards, an end of femininity as Americans knew it? Women would be forced into combat in the military, Schlafly warned, and her centuries-old rationales apparently resonated. ERA opponents perpetuated the stereotype of the angry woman activist humorlessly forcing her views on a population that only needed protection from feminists themselves, not from unfair laws or working conditions. As anti-suffragists had once argued, "real" women, as opposed to aggressive and frustrated suffragists, were in no need of a vote that would debase them by bringing the corrupting influence of politics into their pure domestic worlds.

It took time for American women to begin to chip away at these cultural assumptions about femininity, as well as the tenets of English common law depriving them of the full legal status of adult citizens. The question finally arose at a fateful afternoon tea attended by Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Seneca Falls, New York: why don't women enjoy *all* of the rights and privileges won in the American Revolution when they, too, had shared in the risks?

Women would not gain the vote by polite request. It was the unrelenting efforts of activists,

writers, artists, theorists, labor organizers, and rank-and-file women (and some men) that shifted the very ground on which the debate was held. Women like Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Carrie Chapman Catt, Mary Church Terrell, Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, and too many others to name, shifted cultural assumptions and political discourse. It is possible that women would still be excluded from government today had it not been for these visionary and unrelenting efforts to challenge the common assumption that women were too physically weak and emotional (at the expense of being rational) to be allowed to have a voice in government. It took clear-eyed, forward-thinking, persistent, and sometimes cantankerous individuals to envision a nation in which half of its population would not be denied the privileges of citizenship.

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson posited that "all men are created equal" under natural law emanating from the Creator (not from monarchs), each entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." At the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton "sampled" Jefferson's words in her own document, purposely echoing his revolutionary rhetoric, but applying it to women. In her "Declaration of Sentiments," Stanton declared simply: "all men *and women* are created equal," placing women on par with men under natural law—as citizens of the nation. Substituting Jefferson's list of colonists'

United States, 1902



ABOVE, LEFT Susan B. Anthony (*left*) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton shown in a photograph taken three years before Stanton's death in 1902. The two close allies and friends had been at the vanguard of the fight for women's suffrage since meeting in 1851. To honor Stanton's eighty-seventh birthday, Anthony published a letter to her in *Pearson's Magazine*: "We little dreamed when we began this contest, optimistic with the hope and buoyancy of youth, that half a century later we would be compelled to leave the finish of the battle to another generation of women. But our hearts are filled with joy to know that they enter upon this task equipped with a college education, with business experience, with the fully admitted right to speak in public—all of which were denied to women fifty years ago. They have practically one point to gain—the suffrage; we had all." Stanton died two weeks before her birthday, never having seen the letter.

United States, 1870–1880



ABOVE, RIGHT Lucretia Mott (1793–1880) was a women's rights activist, abolitionist, and orator. She was raised a Quaker, which helped inform her anti-slavery views. After meeting at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton began a long collaboration and friendship. In 1848, they organized the first women's rights convention, the Seneca Falls Convention, in Seneca Falls, New York. Despite her opposition to electoral politics, which she viewed as corrupt, Mott signed the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments in support of woman suffrage. Mott also helped found the American Equal Rights Association and after the Civil War, she became the first president. Though she later resigned from the association, Mott continued to play a role in the woman suffrage movement throughout her life.

United States, 1864



ABOVE, LEFT Prominent abolitionist and women's rights activist Sojourner Truth (born Isabella Baumfree, c. 1797–1883) escaped from slavery in 1826 with her young daughter. She became the first black woman to win a lawsuit against a white man when she fought to regain custody of her son. After converting to Methodism in 1843, she changed her name to Sojourner Truth and began traveling as a preacher and abolitionist speaker, saying, "The Spirit calls me, and I must go." In 1851, Truth delivered a speech now known as "Ain't I a Woman?" at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention, demanding equal human rights for women and black people in the United States.

United States, 1848



ABOVE, RIGHT The renowned American abolitionist Frederick Douglass (born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, c. 1818–1895), was a vocal and dedicated ally of the woman suffrage movement. Born into slavery, Douglass escaped before he was twenty. His eloquence and impassioned speeches on the horrors of slavery won him a sizable following as a speaker. His moral authority carried tremendous weight at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, but his relationship with the suffrage leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony suffered in the 1860s over his support for the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which extended the rights of citizenship to black men, but not women of any color. Nonetheless, Douglass was seated next to Anthony at a women's convention in Washington, D.C. when he was stricken with the heart attack that was to end his life.

grievances against King George, Stanton enumerated grievances of woman against man: “He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice,” she boldly asserted, rejecting the Enlightenment notion that women lacked the capacity to exercise judgment in political affairs. But her ninth resolution to the Declaration of Sentiments was, for the times, the boldest assertion of them all: “Resolved, that it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.” She demanded that women be allowed to vote at a time when it was virtually unthinkable. So shocking was her demand, that among her supporters only the abolitionist giant Frederick Douglass stood up at the convention and endorsed her controversial resolution, believing that *universal adult* suffrage, for black people *and* women, was a worthy goal of the new Republic.

In 1851, Stanton met the woman abolitionist who was to become her steadfast friend and partner in the fight for suffrage for more than fifty years—Susan B. Anthony. The two women very quickly became a formidable team: Stanton had already established herself as a visionary and writer, while Anthony was an unparalleled organizer and a master tactician. In Stanton’s words, “I forged the thunderbolts, and she fired them.” But these women were very different people with different aims for the woman suffrage movement. Where Stanton was a solidly middle-class Presbyterian, married with seven children, Anthony, who never married, was raised a Quaker in a Massachusetts mill town. As

a consequence of their different situations, Stanton’s focus for woman suffrage was to give women like herself control over decisions affecting their daily lives and status as mothers and wives. Anthony, who had to be economically self-reliant, became one of the few in this pioneer generation of suffragists to sympathize with the needs of growing numbers of female factory workers and wage earners. But regardless of their reasons for becoming activists, Stanton and Anthony shared the belief that the vote was the lynchpin of women’s fight for autonomy.

If Stanton’s Declaration of Sentiments was the shot fired across the bow in 1848, the battle that came to be known as the American suffrage movement was a halting and tortured affair. It took another seventy-two years for American women to gain the right to vote at the federal level. There was the small matter of the U.S. Civil War, which thwarted any forward advance; early suffrage leaders were split on whether or not to postpone their pursuit of the vote to focus on the abolition of slavery first, though eventually that is exactly what they did. For this reason, the woman suffrage movement shares much of its DNA with the great abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century. Both movements were predicated on the notion that an oppressed people were entitled to be “citizens,” with their full complement of rights and obligations. For suffrage leaders like Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the fight to rid African Americans of the bonds of slavery caused them to think of their own sort of bondage