

# Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions

## Seneca Falls Convention, July 1848

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind require that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government. ...

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners ...

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given ... the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her. He allows her in Church, as well as State, but a subordinate position. ...

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavored ... to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation—in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and National legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions embracing every part of the country.

## Resolutions

Whereas, The great precept of nature is conceded to be, that “man shall pursue his own true and substantial happiness.” ... therefore,

1. **Resolved**, That such laws as conflict ... with the true and substantial happiness of woman, are contrary to the great precept of nature and of no validity ...
2. **Resolved**, That all laws which prevent woman from occupying such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate, or which place her in a position inferior to that of man, are contrary to the great precept of nature, and therefore of no ... authority.
3. **Resolved**, That woman is man’s equal—was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such.
4. **Resolved**, That the women of this country ought to be enlightened in regard to the laws under which they live, that they may no longer publish their degradation by declaring themselves satisfied with their present position, nor their ignorance, by asserting that they have all the rights they want.
5. **Resolved**, That inasmuch as man, while claiming for himself intellectual superiority, does accord to woman moral superiority, it is pre-eminently his duty to encourage her to speak and teach ... in all religious assemblies.
6. **Resolved**, That the same amount of virtue, delicacy and refinement of behavior that is required of woman ... should also be required of man, and the same transgressions should be visited with equal severity on both man and woman.

7. **Resolved**, That the objection of indelicacy and impropriety, which is so often brought against woman when she addresses a public audience, comes with a very ill-grace from those who encourage, by their attendance, her appearance on the stage, in the concert, or in feats of the circus.
8. **Resolved**, That woman has too long rested satisfied in the circumscribed limits which corrupt customs and a perverted application of the Scriptures have marked out for her, and that it is time she should move in the enlarged sphere which her Creator has assigned her.
9. **Resolved**, That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.\*
10. **Resolved**, That the equality of human rights results necessarily from the fact of the identity of the race in capabilities and responsibilities.
11. **Resolved**, therefore, That, being invested by the Creator with the same capabilities, and the same consciousness of responsibility for their exercise, it is ... the right and duty of woman, equally with man, to promote every righteous cause by every righteous means; and especially in regard to the great subjects of morals and religion, it is self-evidently her right to participate with her brother in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and by speaking ...; and this being a self-evident truth ..., any custom or authority adverse to it ... is to be regarded as a self-evident falsehood, and at war with mankind.

Note: Elizabeth Cady Stanton had drafted all the above resolutions. At the last session Lucretia Mott offered the following:

12. **Resolved**, That the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women, for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce.

\* From Philip Foner, ed., *We, The Other People: Alternative Declarations of Independence by Labor Groups, Farmers, Woman's Rights Advocates, Socialists, and Blacks 1829-1975* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1976): "Many of the delegates, even Lucretia Mott, felt that the demand for the right to vote was too advanced for the times and would only heap ridicule on the entire movement. But as Elizabeth Cady Stanton told an audience of Suffragists years later, 'I knew Frederick [Douglass], from personal experience, was just the man for the work.' Hurrying to Douglass' side, Mrs. Stanton read the resolution and asked him to speak on the question. Douglass promptly arose and addressed the delegates. He argued convincingly that political equality was essential for the complete liberation of women. The resolution was adopted by a small majority." All other resolutions were adopted unanimously.