

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902)

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Elizabeth Cady Stanton is believed to be the driving force behind the 1848 Women's Rights Convention, and for the next fifty years played a leadership role in the women's suffrage movement. Stanton was for many years the architect and author of the movement's most important strategies and documents, and worked closely with her long-time partner and friend, Susan B. Anthony.

In 1851 Stanton met temperance worker Susan B. Anthony, and the two joined together in the long struggle to secure the vote for women. Unwilling to commit to a vigorous travel schedule with young children at home, Stanton wrote many of the speeches that were delivered by Anthony.

With the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, NY, Stanton confirmed her role as a leader in the movement. Elizabeth Cady Stanton used the Declaration of Independence as the framework for writing what she titled a "Declaration of Sentiments. In this document, she identified eighteen areas of life where women were treated unjustly (which was precisely the number of grievances America's revolutionary forefathers had listed in their Declaration of Independence from England).

The grievances included in the Declaration of Sentiments:

- Married women were legally dead in the eyes of the law
- Women were not allowed to vote
- Women had to submit to laws when they had no voice in their formation
- Married women had no property rights
- Husbands had legal power over and responsibility for their wives to the extent that they could imprison or beat them with impunity
- Divorce and child custody laws favored men, giving no rights to women
- Women had to pay property taxes although they had no representation in the levying of these taxes
- Most occupations were closed to women and when women did work they were paid only a fraction of what men earned
- Women were not allowed to enter professions such as medicine or law
- Women had no means to gain an education since no college or university would accept women students
- With only a few exceptions, women were not allowed to participate in the affairs of the church
- Women were robbed of their self-confidence and self-respect, and were made totally dependent on men

Elizabeth Cady Stanton died in 1902, and like Anthony and did not live to see women's suffrage in the United States. She is nonetheless regarded as one of the major forces in the drive toward equal rights for women in the United States and throughout the world.