**(6:38) The Struggle for Woman’s Suffrage**

A group of women holding banners

Description automatically generated

Suffragettes protest in front of the White House in Washington DC, February 1917.

**Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments**

Compare the excerpts from the Declaration of Independence and the Declaration of Sentiments and answer the accompanying questions.

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| **Declaration of Independence**  We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness; That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. | **Declaration of Sentiments**  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, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. |

**Questions**

1. How are these statements similar and different?
2. What important distinction is made in the first line of this excerpt?
3. In your opinion, why did Stanton base the Declaration of Sentiments on the Declaration of Independence?

Many newspapers and journals condemned the Seneca Falls Convention. The ideas expressed at the convention were considered scandalous at a time period when many men and women felt that a woman’s proper and natural place was in the home as the subordinate to her husband. Read the excerpt from *The Mechanics Advocate*, Women’s Department, 1848, and answer the accompanying questions.

“We are sorry to see that the women, in several parts of the State, are holding what they call “Women’s Rights Conventions,” and setting forth a formidable list of those rights, in a parody of the Declaration of American Independence . . . The women at these meetings, no doubt at the expense of their more appropriate duties . . . assert that it is wrong to deprive them of the privilege to become legislators, doctors, lawyers, etc . . . Now it requires no argument to prove that this is all wrong. Any true-hearted female will instantly feel that it is unwomanly, and to be practically carried out, the males must change their position in society to the same extent.”

**Questions:**

1.What disagreements does the author of the article have with “Women’s Rights Conventions”?

2. According to the author, if women change their position in society, how will this effect men?

3. In your opinion, why were some women opposed to ideas presented in the Declaration of Sentiments?

Frederick Douglass was one of the few men present at the Seneca Falls Convention. He wrote about it in an article in *The North Star****,*** July 28, 1848. Read the passage and answer the accompanying questions.

“One of the most interesting events of the past week was the holding of what is technically styled a Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls. The speaking, addresses, and resolutions of this extraordinary meeting was wholly conducted by women . . . Several interesting documents setting forth the rights as well as the grievances of women were read. Among these was a Declaration of Sentiments, to be regarded as the basis of a grand movement for attaining the civil, social, political, and religious rights of women. We should not do justice to our own convictions, or to the excellent persons connected with this infant movement, if we did not in this connection offer a few remarks on the general subject which the Convention met to consider and the objects they seek to attain. In doing so, we are not insensible that the bare mention of this truly important subject in any other than terms of contemptuous ridicule and scornful disfavor is likely to excite against us the fury of bigotry and the folly of prejudice . . . All that distinguishes man as an intelligent and accountable being, is equally true of woman, and if that government only is just which governs by the free consent of the governed, there can be no reason in the world for denying to woman the exercise of the elective franchise, or a hand in making and administering the laws of the land.”

**Questions**

1. How does Douglass view the events at Seneca Falls?
2. In your opinion, does the fact that Fredrick Douglass is a man, an African American, and a former slave make his article more convincing or less convincing to the reader? Explain your answer.

**The Struggle for Woman’s Suffrage – Chronology**

1848 The first women’s rights convention in the United States is held in Seneca Falls, New York.

1866 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony form the American Equal Rights Association, an organization for white and black women and men dedicated to the goal of universal suffrage.

1870 The Fifteenth Amendment enfranchises black men.

1872 Susan B. Anthony is arrested and brought to trial in Rochester, New York, for attempting to vote for Ulysses S. Grant in the presidential election. Sojourner Truth appears at a polling booth in Grand Rapids, Michigan, demanding a ballot; she is turned away.

1878 A Woman Suffrage Amendment is introduced in the United States Congress. The wording is unchanged in 1919, when the amendment finally passes both houses.

1890 Wyoming admitted to the Union with its suffrage provision intact.

1893 Colorado becomes the first state to adopt a state amendment enfranchising women.

1912 Theodore Roosevelt’s Progressive (Bull Moose/Republican) Party becomes the first national political party to adopt a woman suffrage plank.

1913 Alice Paul and Lucy Burns organize the Congressional Union, later known as the National Women’s Party (1916). Members of the Woman’s Party participate in hunger strikes, picket the White House, and engage in other forms of civil disobedience to publicize the suffrage cause.

1916 Jeannette Rankin of Montana becomes the first American woman elected to represent her state in the U.S. House of Representatives.

1920 The Nineteenth Amendment is ratified. “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

**Changing Roles for Women**

**A. Carrie Chapman Catt Describes the Campaign for Suffrage:** “To get the word male in effect out of the constitution cost the women of the country 52 years of pauseless campaign; 56 campaigns of referenda to male voters; 480 campaigns to urge Legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters; 30 campaigns to urge presidential party conventions to adopt women suffrage planks in party platforms; and 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses.”

**B. Harriot Stanton Blatch Describes Women Workers:** “The American woman is going over the top. Four hundred and more are busy on aeroplanes at the Curtiss works . . . The skill of the women staggers one. After a week or two they master the operations on the ‘turret,’ gauging and routing machines. The best worker on the ‘facing’ machine is a woman.”

**C. Woodrow Wilson Addresses the U.S. Senate**: “We have made partners of the women in this war; shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right? This war could not have been fought,...if it had not been for the services of the women...wherever men have worked, and upon the very skirts and edges of battle itself.”