



PAIRING A PRIMARY & SECONDARY SOURCE

'All Men and Women Are Created Equal'

The campaign for women's suffrage began in July 1848, when the nation's first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. The convention produced the Declaration of Sentiments, a document drafted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other suffrage leaders calling for gender equality; it was signed by 68 women and 32 men. Read this excerpt along with the *Upfront* article about the women's suffrage movement. Then answer the questions that follow.

Excerpt from the Declaration of Sentiments, July 20, 1848

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. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves,

by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

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.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

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. . . .

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country . . . 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 these United States.

Questions

1. From what historic document did the authors borrow language? Why do you think they did so?
2. How would you describe the tone of this Declaration?
3. What evidence of men's "tyranny" is offered?
4. How do you think this document was received by the general public in 1848? Explain.
5. Based on this primary-source text and the *Upfront* article, why do you think the Seneca Falls Convention is considered such a milestone?