

Essay Review

Women's Suffrage

A very important effort made to increase the voting rights and correct the oppression of a minority group was when women earned the right to vote with the 19th Amendment. At the time of the amendment, women were allowed to vote in some states (Wyoming had always allowed women to vote), but the 19th Amendment guaranteed all women who were of age and legal citizens the right to vote in any state.

This effort began seventy-two years earlier, when the first Women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, N.Y. in 1848. The idea for this convention was conceived by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott when they attended the World Abolition Society meeting in London.

**Here they were forced to sit in the
“women’s section,” behind a curtain.
This injustice gave them the idea to
have a convention drawing attention
to the plight of women back in
America.**

Several years later, Lucretia Mott came to Seneca Falls and met with Mrs. Stanton. Together they quickly planned a convention to meet at a local church and took out advertisements in local newspapers. To their delight, the meeting drew nearly two hundred and fifty people – including forty men.

On the first day the women met and discussed a range of issues, including women having property owning rights, equal access to education and employment, and suffrage (voting).

These resolutions were part of their Declaration of Sentiments (modeled after the Declaration of Independence)
All of the resolutions were unanimously passed except the last one – voting rights for women.

The suffrage (or voting rights) resolution was so controversial (people having strong differences of opinion on each side of the issue) that it was in doubt whether the women themselves would even approve it.

Finally, Frederick Douglass, a famous former slave and abolitionist (someone opposed to slavery) asked to speak.

He argued that unless women had the right to vote, all their other resolutions would be worthless because they could be given and taken away by the male only voters. After hearing Douglass' arguments, the women voted and approved the final voting resolution.

Soon after the convention, Elizabeth Cady **Stanton** teamed up with Susan B. **Anthony**, and the two worked for the rest of their lives trying to gain voting rights for women (unfortunately they both died before their goal was realized).

One method they tried was **civil disobedience** (breaking the laws peacefully to draw attention to a cause).

When Susan B. Anthony registered and voted in Rochester, she was arrested. Making the most of the opportunity, she used the incident to draw attention to the injustice of the laws. She was found guilty, but refused to pay the fine.

Stanton and Anthony also tried to petition Congress to change the voting laws. Gathering thousands of signatures on their petitions, they sent them to Congress hoping this would pressure them into making changes. Unfortunately, the legislatures ignored the effort.

During the Progressive era (early 1900's), women suffragettes used rallies and marches to draw attention to their cause. Thousands dressed in white outfits and marched peacefully through the streets carrying signs demanding voting rights for women. Finally, during this era of democratic reforms, the 19th Amendment was passed guaranteeing women the right to vote.

What was an event that started the women's movement?

In 1848, the first Women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, N.Y.

**Remember... women rewrote
the Declaration of
Independence to include
women and called it the**
Declaration of
Rights and
Sentiments

**Who were two leaders of
the women's movement?**

Susan B. Anthony

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

**What were some strategies
women suffragettes to used
draw attention to their cause?**

speech

press

assembly (marches)

**petition (signatures for Congress to
change voting laws – did not work)**

**Susan B. Anthony tried civil
disobedience...**

**when she registered to vote in
Rochester and was arrested.**

**She was found guilty but
refused to pay the fine.**

**When did women finally get
the right to vote?**

**The 19 th Amendment was
finally passed in 1920 – during
the Progressive Era (time of
reforms).**

The End